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## LIFE ON THE BIG SLAB: IDENTITY AND MOBILITY IN THE UNITED STATES TRUCKING INDUSTRY

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LIFE ON THE BIG SLAB: IDENTITY AND MOBILITY IN THE UNITED STATES  
TRUCKING INDUSTRY

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
College of Arts and Sciences  
at the University of Kentucky

By

Valerie Jean Keathley

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Richard Schein, Professor of Geography

Lexington, Kentucky

2014

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### LIFE ON THE BIG SLAB:

#### IDENTITY AND MOBILITY IN THE UNITED STATES TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Many changes have occurred in the United States trucking industry over the last thirty years. This study examines the effects of these changes by looking at three related themes: life on the road and life at home, body image and bodily health, and the experiences of women and sexual minorities in the industry. This research is based on a discourse analysis of interviews conducted with truck drivers and trucking industry leaders.

Most truck drivers say that they value the independent nature of their workplace. Yet the independence that is a part of the trucker mystique is challenged by increased surveillance and the availability of more invasive surveillance technologies to motor carriers and the United States government.

At the same time drivers face long periods of time away from home and they experience disconnection from their families. Families must learn to adapt to the absence of their trucking loved ones which is a difficult task. However, sometimes these adaptations can result in positive changes for partners at home, such as increased independence and more authority in the home.

The bodies of truck drivers are also examined. Many drivers believe that their image as workers has taken a turn for the worst and the bodily presentation plays an important role in image. Drivers seek to set themselves apart from drivers who they think perpetuate negative images of their industry through sloppy dress and a lack of professionalism. At the same time, there is increasing evidence that the working conditions of this industry lead to unhealthy bodies that are diseased and worn out.

Finally, very little has been written about women or gays and lesbians in this workplace. Women represent only five percent of this industry and they face significant barriers to surviving in this occupation because many male workers seek to marginalize them through exclusionary practices like sexual harassment. Members of the LGBT community are represented in the industry and find both comfort and exclusion in

trucking. This work also examines the sexual subcultures in trucking such as sex workers and truck chasers.

**KEYWORDS:** mobility, workplace studies, geography and gender;  
geography of sexuality, road culture

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1/29/14

LIFE ON THE BIG SLAB: IDENTITY AND MOBILITY IN THE UNITED STATES  
TRUCKING INDUSTRY

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I dedicate this work to:

Mona Arritt for sticking by me during this long journey

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I also want to express my gratitude to Lynn Everson at the Spokane Regional Health District for allowing me to shadow her in her quest to bring comfort and humanity to those who most need and deserve it. She is a sight to behold and a force to be reckoned with.

Then there is my family who love and support me even when it doesn't make sense on paper and in times when it seems like my neurotic ways couldn't get much worse. A special thanks to my father who served as the inspiration.



Most of all I want to thank my driver respondents for the time they took to share their lives with me. The men and women I spoke with are hard workers who love their job. I could only hope to have the work ethic and dedication that I witnessed among these laborers. They are resilient, ambitious, compassionate, funny, knowledgeable, proud, and fierce even as they face a tragic lack of gratitude for all they provide to this nation.

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## Chapter 1: Trucking Family

For thirty six years I have been connected to the United States trucking industry through my father who has been driving since 1974. My dad loves to tell people that when I was born he took me home for a grand total of 100 dollars thanks to Teamster medical benefits. I still have the door key to my father's 1971 red cabover International<sup>1</sup>. This was the first truck he ever owned. When I look at the key now it represents risk, bravery, hard work, and smarts. My dad did not know if he was going to succeed in this industry, but he took a chance because he knew that the sedentary life was not for him. He loved driving and he wanted to be his own boss despite the fact he could have had more stable work at the steel mill or on the railroad.

In the early part of his career he was a Teamster and the industry was regulated for fair rates, wages, and work hours. He also had a group of coworkers that he socialized with and spent a lot of time "loafing around" at the terminal socializing with them to the chagrin of my mom. He also had friends that he knew from the road that he would meet up with at truck stops and diners. Back then, being a trucker and being on the road was fun.

Then deregulation came in 1980 and by 1986 the small trucking company that he was leased to shut down. I remember sensing something was wrong but I was not fully aware of what this meant for my father. He had to have been scared but I now know that at this point my dad became a business man. Instead of finding another line of work, he was

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<sup>1</sup> A cabover is a "flat nosed" truck where drivers are basically sitting on top of the engine block. The driver's body experiences a lot of vibration in this truck but they are cheaper than conventional trucks. Some companies, like Schneider International, strictly used cabovers to save money. A conventional truck looks like an anteater and they are preferable to cabovers.

able to act on networking that he started when he was still driving for his company. My dad was also able to capitalize on an image problem in the trucking industry, namely sloppy dress and unprofessionalism. He started wearing button down shirts, nice blue jeans or khaki pants, expensive shoes and cologne. He developed an impeccable sense of being on time. When he approached dispatchers and brokers about hauling their steel and lumber he stood out. People felt like he was someone they could trust with their business. He was successful and managed to support his family for almost ten years as an independent driver. Then he moved into hazmat as a company driver and is now the lead driver who is respected by his peers.

I spent a lot of time around my dad's workplace. When he was home he would take me with him to truck repair places and to see dispatchers. I went out in the truck with him on three occasions. I also occasionally went with him on day trips. As I look back, it seemed like everything in trucking was dirty except for my father's truck. I was also around really interesting people, one of whom knew Jimmy Hoffa. I grew up hearing tales of speeding tickets, avoiding weigh stations, run ins with law enforcement, prostitutes and gay men loitering in truck stops and rest areas, hot log books, impounds, strikes, and the dangers of life on the road.

I have always had nagging questions about my dad's workplace, though. Why does he stay out on the road? Did he miss being out there when he was home? Where were the women drivers? Who were these lot lizards? What were these guys doing at the rest areas? Was he ever scared out on the road? I am proud of what he does, why does he seem to be embarrassed by it? And finally, why did people always tell me that my dad did not look like a truck driver? What is he supposed to look like?

So I use these questions as a jumping off point to look at an industry that is of great importance to the economy. It is also a community of people who are continually maligned by the industry as well as press and media. According to several agencies like the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) men and women like my dad are unsafe and are a threat to the public.

I interviewed twenty nine drivers who were in various stages of their career. Most of them love their job but also feel trapped. They are empowered but feel like surveillance and regulation is creeping in to destroy their once cherished position as highway cowboys or knights of the highway. However, I also met people who resented those very images as being negative and did not mind the surveillance. I also talked to women, ethnic minorities, and sexual minorities who struggle each day to make their identities and bodies fit into this industry.

The goal of this research is to put a face on workers, like my father, who labor for consumer products in varying stages of production. This research also takes up Herod's challenge to examine the lives of workers rather than solely focusing on capital accumulation (Herod, 1997). As Herod argues, only one part of capitalism's story is explained when the onus of the story is told from the perspective of financiers, firms, and management (Herod, 1997). As such, this dissertation will show that these workers are clever, resilient, and dedicated to doing the best job they can despite the everyday obstacles that make it a challenging space of work.

As this dissertation will demonstrate, my dad's story and the stories of other drivers, revolves around adapting to a mobile workplace. Every moment for a truck driver is

spent adjusting his or her body and identity to the effects of a highly mobile life including staying safe and healthy, dealing with home and family, the image of their occupation, as well as gender, and sexuality.

## **Background**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) says that the heavy duty and tractor trailer industry employed 1,701,500 people in 2012 and they make around 40,000 dollars per year. The estimated hourly pay for the heavy duty and tractor trailer industry is \$19.40 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). The trucking industry produces 603.9 billion dollars' worth of revenue each year (McNally, 2013) and transports the vast majority of consumer goods and services in the United States today. In the industry as a whole, 5.4 percent of the workforce is made up of women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). In terms of racial and ethnicity representations, 14 percent of the industry is made up of African Americans while 19.3 percent of drivers are Hispanic/Latino (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

In terms employment, truck drivers can drive for a company using the company's equipment or they can be an owner operator and own their own equipment. An owner operator can be independent, meaning that the driver arranges for his or her own loads. However, some owner operators lease on to a company and haul loads arranged by the motor carrier. According to the Owner Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) there are approximately 350,000 owner operators in the United States. However, the majority of truck drivers in the United States are company drivers. Most of the respondents for this research were company drivers at the time of the interview. Eight



of the drivers were owner operators and some of the drivers had owned their own truck previously.

There are two main types of motor carriers in the United States. Those are “for hire” carriers, who deliver goods for other businesses, and “private carriers”, who only haul the goods of their own company (Apostolides, 2009). Most of the drivers in this study drove in the for hire sector. That sector is further divided into the “truck load” and “less than truck load.” Truck load carriers haul only one load at a time and the load is transported from a single shipper to a single receiver (Apostolides, 2009). In contrast, less than truck load operations consist of several different shipments in one trailer that are delivered to a terminal. The various shipments are then broken down into smaller shipments that are going to the same general geographic area and loaded onto several different trucks (Apostolides, 2009). Both truck load and less than truck load sectors can offer local service and long haul service. All of the drivers in this study are in the long haul sector and all were involved in truck load operations.

At several points during this dissertation, I use the term “the industry” which refers to several different stakeholders. These stakeholders include drivers, motor carrier companies, government agencies, trade associations, and non-profit organizations. The appendix includes a table that describes major stakeholders in the industry such as the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the American Trucking Association (ATA), the Owner Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA), state law enforcement, and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT).

One of the biggest changes in the trucking industry was the deregulation of interstate trucking operations through the Motor Carrier Act (MCA) of 1980 and the deregulation of intrastate trucking operations through the Trucking Industry Regulatory Reform Act (TIRRA) in 1995. These acts ended 45 years of regulation that controlled hauling rates and limited entry into the industry. Deregulation decreased the costs of shipping for businesses and consumers, improved productivity in the industry (Evans, 1980), and undercut the power of the Teamsters union (Belzer, 2000). According to Michael Belzer (2000), the industry is now a “sweatshop on wheels” as he argues deregulation created abusive working conditions for truck drivers and lower pay.

Consumers have benefited from the decreased shipping costs and faster deliveries that followed deregulation but it has been at the expense of the workers. Drivers do not have the same safety protections as other laborers, a guaranteed minimum wage, or time and one half. These conditions present the industry with a driver shortage and high turnover rates that only get worse as older drivers retire. A frequently cited solution to this problem is increased recruiting among women, and minorities (Global Insight, 2005).

There is another part of the background information about trucking that also needs to be pointed out. I return my father’s story to give context. While my dad has been in that driver seat, he witnessed deregulation, the decline of the American steel industry, the decimation of Teamster representation in the industry, and the disappearance of blue collar jobs. What he did not know when he started driving was that he would be able to maintain a relatively middle class life for his family while his peers were being laid off at the steel mill and factories. Today trucking is a last resort for many men and women who

have lost their jobs through outsourcing and mechanization. It is also increasingly a job choice for white collar workers who have been downsized and outsourced.

## **Argument**

The main argument of this work is that a lot has changed since drivers like my father started in this industry but some things have remained the same. Deregulation has increased the exploitation of truck drivers to the point that Michael Belzer (2002) calls trucking a “sweatshop on wheels.” As a result, this can be a really unappealing job choice and leads to a driver shortage and high turnover rates that is so concerning to industry leaders. These poor working conditions are exacerbated by an economy that is structured around getting products to consumers in as little time and at as low cost as possible.

This study examines the effects of these changes by looking at: life on the road, life at home, the image of truck driver and the health of truck drivers. Also, this study looks at the idea of recruiting more women and LGBT persons to make up for the driver shortage. This is a major change for the trucking industry because women and sexual minorities have been virtually ignored.

In terms of life on the road drivers still work in difficult conditions but the appeal of life on the open highway is still present for some people. Yet the independence and lack of an office-type environment that is a part of the trucker mystique is challenged by increased surveillance by motor carriers and the United States government.

One thing that has not changed is the way in which drivers make home when they are on the road and the ways in which the home is affected by a loved one being gone. The truck

is a site of struggle between employees and employers in determining what space belongs to work and what spaces belong to domestic practices that seek to establish stability in a mobile environment. I also introduce the idea that having a loved one that is gone for long periods of time can actually result in positive changes for those who are left behind.

The bodies of truck drivers are also examined in terms of change. In regards to image and change, many drivers believe that their reputation as workers has taken a turn for the worst and they seek to set themselves apart from drivers who perpetuate negative images of their industry. This harms solidarity among these workers. Another change in terms of drivers and their bodies is that their health is seriously damaged by their working conditions in unprecedented ways. Unfortunately, agencies that monitor drivers' health do so only in the context of removing dangerous bodies from the road that threaten the general populace.

The final two arguments surround women in trucking and sexual minorities, two groups that have been traditionally ignored by drivers and industry. Very little has been written about these groups in terms of trucking yet they are supposed to help ameliorate a driver shortage. Women represent only five percent of this industry and they face significant barriers to surviving in this occupation because many male workers seek to marginalize them through exclusionary practices like sexual harassment. Members of the LGBT community are also represented in the industry and find both comfort and exclusion in trucking. In both cases, there are new non-profit organizations that focus on these identity groups.

## **Contributions**

This will be the first qualitative study of the truck driver in geography. Trucking is an interesting case because most workplace studies focus on industries where work and home are distinct spaces. The trucking industry presents a scenario where the division between home and work are not so easily defined. It will also be the first work on trucking that examines the experience of women and sexual minorities in the industry.

This is an important aspect of the research because if women and minorities are posed as the industry solution to labor shortages, the voices of these individuals need to be included in the overall picture of the industry. Geography plays a crucial role in explaining why women and sexual minorities are underrepresented in the industry since the intersection of power and identity are often embedded within spatial practices.

This is not the first book on trucking. There are currently four books available that deal with trucking. There is *Sweatshop on Wheels* by Michael Belzer, a former driver, who examines the effects of deregulation on the industry. *Pedal to the Metal*, also written by former driver Lawrence J. Ouellet, which examines the work life of truck drivers and the motivations for self-exploitation among drivers. Graham Coster is not a driver but he details his experience of going out on the road with drivers in the United States and Europe. Finally, there is *Independents Declared* by Michael H. Agar which examines work life for independent owner operators.

However, my work is different from these books. First, it is completely based on the spatial elements of mobility and identity and looks at the road, the home, bodies, sexuality and gender. This dissertation centers the accounts of truck drivers and uses

extensive quotes as a result. Also my position as an insider and outsider gives me a unique perspective because I know what life on the road is like but I also know what it is like to be left behind at home. My experience as an outsider also meant that I had questions about the industry that drivers, and the authors of other work on trucking, might not consider. For example, I noticed the invisibility of LGBT drivers in this workplace as well as the low numbers of women. I wanted to know why the industry was structured to marginalize workers in these groups and why it mattered.

The resulting data will make contributions to studies of mobility, cultural geography, and labor studies with an emphasis on gender and sexuality. I hope that this research will help improve the labor conditions that drivers face by providing scholars and policymakers with research results that makes the experiences and needs of the laborers the primary focus. As Fine, Weis, Wesseen, and Wong argue, policies are too often enacted with little input from the working class individuals who will be affected (Wong, 2000). Finally, this research will add to the growing body of geographic knowledge about mobility, space, and identity.

### **Geographies of Mobility and Identity**

While each chapter features a review of literature that deals with the topic at hand, I approach this dissertation with two main overarching sets of theory. Those are geographies of identity as well as geographies of mobility.

## **Identity and Geography**

Human geographers contend that identity is socially constructed (Castree, 2003; Panelli, 2004). Identity consists of a wide variety of categories such as race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, place of origin, and occupation. Geographers are interested in identity because it is closely linked with spatial processes. The identity that a person claims is often dependent upon their location and their audience (Myslik, 1996; Panelli, 2004; Valentine, 1996). Identity formation, in essence, is about differentiating oneself from others through the use of mental and physical boundaries (Sibley, 1995).

What kind of person is welcome in a particular place is also a part of that spatial identity and people aggressively defend the spatial boundaries that are linked to those identities (Castree, 2003; Massey & Jess, 2000; Valentine, 1996). In order to maintain those boundaries, people might be excluded from particular spaces. For example, In order for men to shore up their gender and sexuality at work, they have historically worked to keep women out of the workplace (Baron, 2006, 2007; Freeman, 1993; Kimmel, 1994 ). The ‘old boys network’ that is pervasive in many industries make it difficult for women to participate in the socialization that is so important for promotion and success within the workplace (McDowell & Court, 1994; Yarnal, Dowler, & Hutchinson, 2004) The white male is still the default laborer in the public’s mind (Baron, 2006, 2007; Puwar, 2004; Reitman, 2006).

Geography’s concern with identity is a part of a wider effort to examine the particulars of human experience in what has been called the ‘cultural turn’ in human geography. Like many scholars, my research is grounded in poststructuralist theory, most notably the work

of Michel Foucault. Foucault was interested in the ways in which discourse and institutions work to create identities. His theories are potent explanations for the ways in which identities are constructed and maintained. Central to poststructuralism is the idea of positionality, which fosters a concern for the contextual realities of individual lives. Humans contain multiple experiences and identities that arise and intersect from those experiences. This affects their perceptions of the world around them.

### **Mobility and Geography**

Some geographers make the argument that geography is a little too focused on fixity and needs to pay more attention to mobility because it is through mobility that people get from place to place (Cresswell & Merriman, 2011; DeLyser, 2011). It is also important for geographers to consider what happens between point A and point B because mobility produces subjectivities and produces places. At the same time, it is necessary to consider how identities are “maintained” and “transformed” through mobility (Cresswell & Dixon, 2002).

Mobility involves the necessary crossing of boundaries and thus it produces feelings of fear and the allure of perceived freedom for both the mobile person and the sedentary person she or he comes in contact with (Cresswell, 1997; Hammer, 2002; Sibley, 1995). This promise of freedom is also a reason for disparate access to mobility that is often contingent upon a person’s identity, like women for example (Domosh & Seager, 2001). Mobility is an existence that is gendered as evidenced by the fact that men are often more able to travel or roam than women are (DeLyser, 2011; Domosh & Seager, 2001).



Domosh and Seager (2001) cite the fact that even today women statistically do not have the same access to cars as men in terms of licenses and ownership

Stereotypes are a common way for people to deal with mobile people. These tropes are fueled by simultaneous feelings of desire and fear. Ferenc Hammer has labeled the trucker a liminal figure, someone who exists in in-between spaces. Members of society tend to set themselves apart from and define themselves in contrast to the liminal figure. In some cases, the liminal figure allows people to see multiple possibilities for their lives (Hammer, 2002). Cresswell makes a similar argument regarding the vagabond. The vagabond was both respected but also maligned. On one hand they were nonconformists and were free (Cresswell, 2011). On the other hand nobody could control his mobility which led to a variety of laws that limited their presence in towns that are still used today in vagrancy laws. The un-fixedness of these liminal figures make people nervous and we see similar kinds of controls on immigrants, for example (Cresswell & Dixon, 2002).

In many instances mobility makes people miss their home which is associated with good feelings, stability, privacy, and civilization through the inculcation of morals (Kothari, 2006). The home is usually the first place in which identity is formed. This is where identity constructs such as race, class, gender, and sexuality begin to form (A. Williams, 2002). But home may not be a pleasant place depending on the circumstances and often this occurs if a person's identity clashes with the people at home (Gorman-Murray, 2006). Really, a person's experience of mobility is dependent upon what prompted or forced the person to leave home in the first place and what or whom they are leaving behind. People do however find ways to create feelings of home in an effort to recreate a

feeling of the well-being and stability that is associated with the home while they are mobile (Baer, 2005; Ryan, 2006; Tolia-Kelly, 2004).

## **Methods and Methodology**

This research began in Summer 2008 during which time I drove cross country to meet and interview current and former truck drivers. I used a few main ways of initially contacting potential respondents. First I used the snowball technique through contacts that I had established during the proposal process. Second, I posted requests for interviews on internet forums for truck drivers. Third, I posted requests for interviews with groups like Women in Trucking and the Gay Truckers Association. As the project progressed, I would come across leaders in the industry that I felt could add a unique perspective to the work and I would contact them.

Each of the driver interviews was tape recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Most interviews were between one and three hours. If possible I would conduct driver interviews in person and if it was not possible I would conduct them in my home in Lexington Kentucky on the telephone. As the chart in the appendix demonstrates, the in-person interviews took place in restaurants and drivers' residences. The two unusual locations were in a driver's truck cab and a former driver's place of work.

Each of the locations had their benefits and drawbacks. I preferred interviews that were in person because it easier to connect with those drivers and I feel like I got to know them better. I specifically liked interviewing drivers at restaurants because it gave me an opportunity to give back to drivers for their time by paying for their meals. However, in some cases it was difficult to transcribe the recordings because of background noise.

Interviewing drivers in their residence was also beneficial because it put them more at ease since they were in control of their surroundings. At the same time, I lost some control over the process because I could not just end the conversation like I could on the telephone, for example. One of the more difficult interviews took place in the home of a husband and wife that drove team together. They invited two other drivers as well as a driver's wife and I had Sunday lunch with them. So I ended up interviewing five people at the same time which made transcribing difficult because I had to match each driver's name with the voice I was hearing on the recorder.

The two unusual cases of interviewing the driver in his truck and interviewing a former driver at her workplace were problematic for a couple of reasons. The interview in the truck took place in California in the middle of summer when diesel fuel was over five dollars a gallon. The resulting interview took around two hours, which meant that the driver had to idle his truck (illegally) for an extensive period of time because it was hot and we needed the air conditioning. This was an expensive interview for the driver. In the case where I interviewed a former driver at her workplace, there was an obvious time constraint because she had work. The interview was very informative but it was slightly uncomfortable because I did not want to interrupt her work responsibilities. These were great interviews, especially since they were in person, but these are an example of how location plays an important role in the interviewing process.

I also informally interviewed sex workers who had truck drivers for clients. One of my respondents does volunteer work for a sex worker outreach and needle exchange program in Spokane Washington at the regional health department. He introduced me to the coordinator for the outreach and needle exchange program and she gave me permission to

ride along with her on the weekly outreach van that goes to known areas of prostitution in the city. Women often come to the van to get condoms, lube, and to exchange their used needles as well as their clients' used needles. The women also come onto the van to take a break, have a snack, and chat with the outreach coordinator who has a long standing relationship with many of these women. Because these women have a trusting relationship with the outreach coordinator, they were willing to talk to me about their experiences once she introduced me. These were very brief discussions because these women were working. They do not typically work at truck stops; these are not the so-called lot lizards that are discussed further in this dissertation. However, they could explain why they would or would not work at truck stops. They were also very knowledgeable about truck drivers as clients because some of them had clients and even friends that were truck drivers. This is a small but important part of the research because most discussions about sex workers and the trucking industry contain little contextual information about the women, much less the actual accounts of the women.

I chose discourse analysis as my primary method because I was interested in how truck drivers talked about their work. Discourse analysis takes what people say seriously and it centers the knowledge of the informant rather than the researcher (Rose, 2001). It also provides researchers with a useful tool to detect means of resistance as well as determine what is left out through silence. For example, in the section on gender, discourse analysis allowed me to identify the role of humor that women drivers use to push back against male chauvinism that works to silence them in the workplace. A survey would never have allowed me to identify such a small but important tactic for women to make their bodies fit into this workplace. Also discourse analysis allows researchers to step away from

masculinist science that makes claims about objectivity (Berg, 2001) and allows the respondents to be the experts

As Appendix 3 shows, I coded the data using four main themes: the road, bodies, sexuality, and gender. I then coded for the subcategories that are detailed in the chart. I used the same method and categories to code press and media materials such as newsletters, industry magazines, and government regulations. I derived these themes initially in the dissertation proposal process through pilot research that included preliminary interviews with truck drivers, books on truck driving, journal articles on truck driving, magazine articles and documentaries about truck drivers. Then, as I went through the interview process I expanded on those main themes to include issues that emerged from my discussions with drivers. The following paragraphs are an exploration of how I developed those subcategories.

In terms of life on the road, I knew that trucking is hard on the family, drivers get lonely, and there are numerous regulations regarding driving commercial vehicles. However, in talking with drivers it became clear that they face real fear while they are on the road even as they love the freedom. It was also clear that drivers were losing a lot of that freedom through surveillance. Furthermore, drivers cherish their relationships with other truckers and they are also concerned about their relationships with their customers.

Similarly, I went into the research knowing that truck drivers had a bad image in media, popular culture, and the general public. I knew that bad image typically focused on trucker bodies. However, I found that there are health consequences for driver bodies as well as concerns about aging, and hygiene. Also, it was obvious that many of the ways in

which the government agencies seek to control truck drivers is through their health and bodily functions, such as sleep.

Finally, I initially thought about sexuality and gender in terms of discrimination. I assumed that industry excluded lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered people (LGBT) and women. The reality was more complicated. Truck drivers find love with other drivers, they enjoy a level of freedom to explore their sexuality, and they are fetishized through images of blue collar masculinity by truck chasers. Furthermore, LGBT drivers may face discrimination because of their orientation but they also build important, supportive social networks while they are on the road. By the same token, women do face significant discrimination in this industry but those obstacles are built around gender expression, having different bodies than men, relationships with other women, and relationships with male drivers. Women even have different attitudes about surveillance techniques like Qualcomm. Furthermore, I found that women have developed ways to cope with and resist discrimination and sexual harassment.

While my research did not solely focus on women, I do describe my research on truck drivers as feminist research because it seeks to include voices that are typically left out of the academy (Nast, 1994) and works to upend privilege within the research context (Moss, 2002). This is particularly important for my trucking respondents because their actual words and thoughts have rarely appeared in research. Researchers typically use the survey method to glean information about drivers. Even in the context of the industry, driver knowledge is rarely included. I have attended industry meetings where every stakeholder was represented except for the actual drivers, even when the drivers were the ultimate audience for the meeting. While independent owner operators are forced to have

this knowledge, many drivers out there do not understand the myriad of federal and state regulations they may be cited for because nobody deems it important to explain it to them.

By the same token, the accounts of women and people of the LGBT community are usually left out as well from discussions about the industry and the use of feminist methodologies helped me to identify those silenced groups. Feminist methodologies have also allowed me to determine the path of my research and not be concerned about “bias” because of my connection to the industry.

However, feminist methodologies emphasis on reflexivity also forced me to consider my own identity within the research process. Even though I was raised around this industry, and I have been out on the road, I only have a partial idea of what it is like to work in this community and culture day in and day out. I do not know what it is like to work in a stigmatized occupation and so I had to be sensitive about how I portrayed these drivers, especially since I ultimately had control over the editing process.

## **Limitations**

There are some limitations to the empirical data of this research. The first is rather obvious; the work is based on twenty nine drivers out of almost a million workers. Yet, the small sample allowed for more detailed accounts of the lives of drivers through their own words, which is severely lacking in the industry and research regarding this industry.

Second, the sample population is not representative of the industry as a whole. Several drivers had some college credits or advanced training outside of trucking. While they

may not have understood the full extent of what a dissertation entails, they were familiar with the research process and were comfortable talking with a stranger about their lives. Also, these drivers did not have any objections to signing a consent form. At the same time, I believe that some drivers spoke to me only because my father is a driver. In contrast, I had several drivers that refused to talk to me after being informed of the consent form or ignored my interview request all together.

Third, I intended to include a more in-depth focus on racial minorities in the industry because previous studies have ignored race. My sample population included diversity, however drivers of color deserve more recognition for their work in the industry than I was able to provide here. This will be a fruitful course of study for post dissertation research.

## **Chapters**

Despite cultural messages that link mobility with freedom and liberation, Chapter 2 will show that mobility can actually restrain people by presenting obstacles and challenges to which people must adapt. Drivers use mental maps to navigate these problems. Life on the road results in personality changes for the better. Several drivers felt that the independence and driving such a physically imposing vehicle, forced them to learn to rely on themselves thus build confidence. However, I show that the predominant image of a trucker as a self-sufficient loner on the highway is a myth. I focus on camaraderie between drivers to show that they need each other and seek each other's support. Finally, although drivers emphasize their freedom from the office and the boss, this is changing as the State and motor carriers utilize surveillance to rein in these decentralized workers.



Technologies such as Qualcomm present a fundamental challenge to the idea that truck drivers are free from the office and free from the boss on the open highway. However, as Chapter 3 will show, one thing that has not changed over the years for drivers is the conflict between life on the road and life at home.

As time goes on in their career, home changes for drivers; it is less of a building and more of an ideal. Chapter 3 shows that drivers are conflicted about home and the road. On one hand they want to be with their families. On the other hand they want to be out on the road because they love their job. There is a good bit of guilt that is felt about leaving families to survive on their own at home and this sometimes leads drivers to mitigate this guilt by emphasizing their role in household finances. Furthermore, there is definitely conflict within trucking families about the absence of their loved ones but the truth is that many partners cope and even thrive by embracing a new found authority and independence. Chapter 4 will cover the issue of image and truck drivers which many drivers say is worse than it once was.

Bodies serve as markers of identity and the body is central to how truck drivers talk about themselves and their occupational identity especially when talking about image because they feel like it has gotten worse. In Chapter 4, I use literature about dirty work to explain that negative images of drivers comes from their ongoing battle against abjection. Most drivers believe that the general public looks down on them because of their job. Drivers resent stereotypes and they blame the bad image of trucking on drivers who do not dress and act professionally. At the same time, drivers blame the media and press for perpetuating negative stereotypes. So I highlight a regular column in *Overdrive*

magazine that encouraged drivers to contact companies that perpetuated stereotypes about truckers. I also show industry efforts to improve the image of the truck driver. Chapter 5 also looks at bodies but in the context of truckerhealth which is getting worse than ever.

The regulatory regime in the trucking industry is only concerned about protecting the public. Chapter 5 examines how damaging trucking is to the human body. The nature of this job makes it difficult to stay healthy and yet diseased bodies are highly problematic in this industry. Unhealthy bodies are found across the industry and some link that to the amount of stress, lack of healthy food choices, and lack of exercise. However, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) excludes many of these bodies, because they are deemed to be a danger to the public's safety. This chapter picks up with the biopolitical regulation of fatigue in this industry as it has become a crucial way in which regulation meets the bodies of truck drivers. Then we move on to Chapter 6, which shows that one of the major changes in the trucking industry is the growing recognition of women and their experience as drivers.

Women represent only 5 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012) of the trucking industry and gender discrimination and sexual harassment are pervasive in this industry. Chapter 6 shows that women are vulnerable to harassment anywhere their job may take them whether it is at the truck stop, at the customers while loading and unloading, or even on the highway. Some of the harassment is really quite frightening. Women drivers experience spatial exclusion in the trucking community but they resist exclusionary practices, and use their struggles to further self improvement. Although these women are up against some truly disheartening circumstances I emphasize that, for the most part,

women enjoy their jobs as truck drivers. It has fulfilled their dreams of being a truck driver and it has allowed them to achieve a financial and personal freedom that they would not have experienced otherwise.

Chapter 7 examines trucker sexuality which is a topic that has traditionally been silenced in the trucking industry. The trucking industry has several subcultures that surround sexuality. Drivers are on the road and anonymous and as a result trucking has allowed many drivers to engage in sexual relations of varying kinds. There are drivers who meet partners out on the road. There are drivers who openly identify as gay or lesbian despite a relatively homophobic workplace. There is even an entire community of ‘truck chasers’ which consists of gay and bisexual men looking for sexual relations with truck drivers. There is also a prevalent subculture of sex work in the industry. This chapter will also show that this workplace is so sexualized that no less than three different non-profits are focused on sex in the industry by seeking to rescue trafficked girls who are sex workers at truck stops.

So we begin with Chapter 2 which sorts through the ways in which drivers cope with being on the road and how they manage in a workplace that is under intensified surveillance.

## Chapter 2: The Road

I have a job to do and I'm responsible for that job by myself. There's no teamwork involved in it... it [is] my job, my responsibility and I'm the only one responsible for it. I [am not] depending on somebody else.

Cynthia

There's no boss sitting next to you, behind you, looking over your shoulder. You are your own boss and the captain of your own ship.

Chris

The quotes above bring out two key aspects of the trucking experience on the road: drivers need to be self-sufficient to get their daily work done and the traditional boss is largely absent. Cynthia compares her experience of working at Target as an associate to being a truck driver. At Target, she had to work in teams and she was often frustrated by free riders, those workers who contributed little and let others to do the work for them. In contrast, as a truck driver, she is an independent worker who determines how and when the job gets done. Chris's quote highlights the fact that drivers like the spatial distance between them and their supervisors. Most truck drivers, that I interviewed, are like Cynthia and Chris, they see themselves as free, rugged individuals who chart their own course out on the highway.

This chapter focuses on truck drivers, like Cynthia and Chris, and how they survive out on the road in this highly mobile workplace. In this chapter, I argue that life on the road has changed for drivers. Truck drivers are in a more comfortable working environment due to mechanical achievements in truck manufacturing but there are vastly improved surveillance technologies, which give the State and motor carriers more centralized

control over this workforce. Ironically, these same technologies can be very helpful to drivers even though they chip away at the image of the self-sufficient highway cowboy culture. Finally, drivers speak of a time when trucking was like a family but now feel like there is less solidarity.

At the same time, though, I argue that some things in the industry have remained the same. Drivers still have to navigate these enormous vehicles while facing safety issues, poor infrastructure, traffic jams, bad weather, and culture clashes on a daily basis. Drivers still struggle with anxiety and fear when they are out on the road and they have to find ways to deal with those challenges. Also, loneliness is still very much a part of this experience and despite the discourse about disunity among drivers, they still depend on each other to combat loneliness, get help, and foster camaraderie.

To further my argument I look at three main factors in demonstrating how trucking has changed and stayed the same out on the road. I first look at the use of mental maps by truck drivers which help them navigate the challenges they meet on the road. The elements of these maps vary among drivers but in general these maps help drivers gain control over their workplace, stay safe, navigate through challenging landscapes, and even people. Then, I talk about camaraderie by outlining the ways in which communication is still very important to truck driver solidarity even though driving culture has changed with the advent of trucking schools. Also, the cell phone is slowly becoming more useful than the traditional Citizens Band (CB) radio. Finally, this chapter looks at the increased surveillance of truck drivers that is made possible through technologies such as Qualcomm, PrePass, and the Transportation Workers Identification Card (TWIC). While trucking has always been monitored by the State through mandating

weight limits, speed, and revenue there has been exponential growth of surveillance that is used by the U.S. government and motor carriers to establish control in this highly mobile workspace.

### **Myths of The Road**

The quintessential trucker movie is the 1978 feature film *Convoy*. This is a film from 1978 that is based on a song by C.W. McCall. In the film, a group of truck drivers are involved in a brawl with law enforcement officers at a truck stop. The drivers form a convoy to outrun law enforcement. The convoy makes national news and takes on a larger meaning about the lack of respect for truck drivers, that life on the road is hard, and a protest against harassment by law enforcement.

The leading character is known by his CB handle Rubber Duck. Rubber Duck is a loner and a rebel. He is an independent owner operator, has no committed relationships, rarely sees his children, and he basically drifts from one truck load to the next. He has an adversarial relationship with law enforcement as evident by a scene where he tells a state trooper “Piss on you and piss on your law.” He delights in outsmarting the cops. However, Rubber Duck is a leader despite the fact he would rather not be labeled as such. He cares about his fellow drivers, voices their concerns about high diesel costs and labor exploitation, and even defends them against police brutality.

Rubber Ducks’s seemingly endless love of the road is, in many ways, very American. Americans have been described as a highly mobile people from the country’s beginning (Everett, 2009; Ireland, 2009; Skidmore, 2011; Walker, Butland, & Connell, 2000). As a result of this mobile culture, Americans have often been described as “restless” (Ireland,

498). America's love of the road celebrates men like Rubber Duck. *Convoy* is but one example of the road movie genre that, according to Ireland (2009), is the product of America's love of mobility and road culture. Road movies like *Bonnie and Clyde*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *Easy Rider* describe heroes, like Rubber Duck, on the margins of society who seek change and opportunity. There are also heroic personalities that are based on road culture like Woody Guthrie or Jack Kerouac who spent a significant amount of time travelling through the United States and recording their experiences. Their very identity within popular culture is defined by their life on the road.

All of these cultural products have very similar descriptions and messages about being on the road. People on the road are inherently rebellious and are looking for change and freedom. They encounter challenges along the way and they are transformed by those experiences (Craggs, 2011; Ireland, 2009; Nóvoa, 2012). People on the road see new places, new people, and they keep moving to see what the next place is like (Nóvoa, 2012). So obviously, the road is also a place of personal reflection (Bill, 2010; Craggs, 2011).

Many people find satisfaction in always being on the move. For workers, mobility provides flexibility and more autonomy because they are not confined to the same kinds of surveillance to (Whitelegg, 2005) which office workers are subjected (Meintel, Fortin, & Cagnet, 2006; Whitelegg, 2005). Many enjoy the travel (Whitelegg, 2005). Indeed, mobility allows both men and women to escape the drudgeries of the sedentary life that is often associated with home (Kristeva, 1991; Stratford, Ellerbrock, Akins, & Hall, 2000; Whitelegg, 2005). Also, life on the road is unpredictable which is exciting and even life-giving. In fact, some scholars have linked the sedentary life with death (Kristeva, 1991).

However, the road is also a dangerous place. The famous Route 66 was a treacherous road with high accident rates despite its romantic appeal (Skidmore, 2011). As the use of automobiles increase, there is an increase in injuries and fatalities (Harvey & Knox, 2012; Klaeger, 2012; Taussig, 1997; Walker et al., 2000; Wells & Beynon, 2011). Also, people experience the road differently. Roger Bill (2010) points to the reality that a road hero like Kerouac came from a privileged background which allowed him to romanticize the road. He could indulge in drugs and sex in his travels but in reality the road is often anything but romantic as the migration during the Dust Bowl or the Trail of Tears demonstrates (Skidmore, 2011).

The road is clearly seen as a spiritual space and romantic but there are concrete uses for the road. In fact, the road is a major space of governmental control. Roads hold a promise for modernity, civilization, and progress so the government harnesses roads to claim sovereignty over its population (Campbell, 2012; Dalakoglou & Harvey, 2012; Harvey & Knox, 2012; Kernaghan, 2012). The road is also a space of capitalism as it is a means to transport consumer goods and a means to sell consumer items (Hosgood, 1994; Klaeger, 2012). As a result, the government provides and maintains an infrastructure of bridges, paved roads, and interstates to make sure that commerce and consumer goods flow unimpeded (Freed, 2010; Harvey & Knox, 2012; Kernaghan, 2012).

This chapter adds to the body of literature regarding road culture and mobility and works to de-romanticize life on the road. Despite cultural messages that link mobility with freedom and liberation, mobility can actually restrain people by presenting obstacles and challenges to which people must adapt. The literature about the road also uncovers the



ways in which governments use surveillance of the road to control mobile people. Most importantly, the State uses its sovereignty in order to foster capitalism and commerce.

### **Mental Mapping of Trucking Routes**

While much of the literature on the road and road culture reproduce notions about freedom and rebellion, other scholars have argued that roads can be destructive (Campbell, 2012) and dangerous (Skidmore, 2011) so people must learn to adapt to those challenges. Trucking has always been a story about adaptations and survival for what they encounter out on the road. Drivers must deal with all sorts of constraints to mobility that are part and parcel of the experience of life on the road. These constraints include severe congestion, bad weather, damaged highways, and a lack of safety all while managing to get to places on time. All of this must also be accomplished while driving an enormous vehicle with trailer. This section looks at the material experience of being on the road, most notably through mental mapping of the various roads on which these drivers travel as well as the ways in which drivers deal with danger. Mental mapping allows drivers to control the unpredictable events encountered while on the road.

In some ways, surviving in modern trucking is now easier. Trucks are larger which gives them bigger beds, more space to move around, and even electricity to run appliances. Trucks are more comfortable. Drivers have air ride seats, air ride suspension, air conditioning, power steering, and, in some cases, automatic transmissions. If a driver has the money and owns his or her own truck, he or she can even install bathrooms and kitchen appliances. There are more options for places to eat and rest through truck stop chains like Pilot, TA, Loves, and Flying J. In these truck stops people can eat, watch

television, play video games, get massages, take showers, buy souvenirs, and get their truck repaired. Also, women actually have a place to go to the bathroom in these new truck stops. Even the material road is easier because of interstates and technologies like GPS.

However, other aspects of surviving on the road have stayed the same. Drivers still have to navigate enormous vehicles that are often over 40 feet long and sometimes, with special permits, weigh 100,000 pounds. One of the main ways that drivers make it out on the road is through the use of mental mapping. When thinking about the landscape that drivers encounter on a daily basis, drivers have clear ideas on what roads they want to drive and roads they do not want to drive. In general, drivers want to run in states that are wide open spatially with little traffic and a small population. These states include Oklahoma, Iowa, Montana, Colorado, New Mexico, Wyoming, Nebraska, Texas, and Kansas. One needs to keep in mind that most drivers are paid by the mile. So their preferences for these states involve the fact that drivers get a lot more miles than they do on the east coast, for example. Some drivers also think these states are safer than states on the east and west coasts.

Furthermore, drivers have to endure all sorts of weather and landscapes. When I spoke with Phil, he was recovering from a serious truck accident caused by black ice in Montana. Although drivers, like the Colorado plains, they also dread the Rocky Mountains especially during the winter because roads are sometimes shut down and drivers have to obey chain laws. This makes it difficult to adhere to delivery deadlines.

In contrast, virtually all of the drivers that I talked to disliked running in the eastern part of the country, There is a lot of traffic, dense populations, and streets that were not meant for tractor and trailers. Judith explained that you cannot make as much money because you do not get the kinds of mileage you would get in the midwest or west and toll roads are common. Tammy said that she and her husband rarely fought but driving in this region was so stressful they always ended up fighting when they were driving in New York and New Jersey.

However I found that people talked about two regions of the country in ways that are typically not thought to be similar: the northeast and California. Drivers argued that these regions are too congested, too dangerous, have too many regulations, and collect too much revenue from truck drivers, and people are rude.

Several drivers also said that people were rude on the east coast. Edgar used the term “attitude” to describe the rudeness he located on the east coast. He gave a little more nuance to this, though. It turned out that his main problem involved I-95 *northbound* starting as soon as he crossed the border from North Carolina into Virginia. According to Edgar, the further north you go the worse the “attitude” gets. He had no problem driving I-95 in Florida, South Carolina, Georgia, or North Carolina because people in these states do not have “attitude.” But not all northeastern states along I-95 offended Edgar.

Apparently, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania are hotbeds of attitude but once you get into Maine “the attitude stops.”

Edgar's account now introduces California as a place that is perceived to be just as hostile towards trucking as the east coast. According to Edgar,

“They [California] are the most liberal state in this country. They have more rules and regulations than Carter's got pills. They are the worst to be in. Probably in the last two years they've lost 60% of their trucking because of their new regulations... Most of their businesses have moved to Nevada to get away from all that nonsense....”<sup>2</sup>

Edgar highlights the fact that drivers see California as a place of ubiquitous regulations. In my conversation with Chris, a native Californian, he was also critical of the various regulations involving trucking although he focused on the environmental regulations. He specifically talked about the new idling laws introduced in 2008 that outlawed any idling over five minutes for large trucks and busses. This is a problem given that drivers need to idle in order to run their heating and air conditioning. So truck owners and trucking companies have had to install power inverters so that they can continue to use heating and air conditioning. This environment law also mandates that beginning in 2008, all diesel engine trucks had to have a device that automatically shuts the truck down after five minutes of idling. Chris also felt that California law enforcement were primarily out to collect revenue from truck drivers.

However, not everybody's mental map is the same. There are clear differences among drivers. When I asked Josie what she missed about driving she liked “having a tan year round” because she was always in the sun while hauling in California. Michelle requested loads to California because they were well paying based on the mileage to get there. As

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<sup>2</sup> Edgar's claim that California is losing business because of their regulations appears to bear out in fact at least according to the California Trucking Association who claims environmental regulations are hurting the trucking industry ("California trucking group slams CARB fuel policies," 2012).

the next quote explains, some drivers found that California was not as bad as drivers let on. In fact Harold and Brandon wanted to stay out in California.

“[Drivers said] ‘Well you know when you get out to California you drop off the edge of the earth. It’s a horrible place out there. Truck drivers go to jail a lot.’ We were scared to go out there. Shit, we loved it. If I had a second home it would be out in California if you could afford it. It’s beautiful out there. We love running out there.”

Similarly, Ralph was very anxious about his first trip to New York City because he heard the roads and people were difficult to deal with. However, once he got there he found that his customers were very kind. They let him park his truck and let him sleep inside their fence (a lot of customers will not allow this) and they even took time to give him explicit directions to his next customer.

However, driving in difficult places like the northeast can also be a test of how good of a driver you are. One of Michelle’s first trips was to Hunts Point in the Bronx which is an intimidating place for most drivers. The fact that Michelle was able to conquer this difficult place was a testament to her skill set. As Connor explains, at first the northeast is an intimidating place but facing the challenges inherent to this landscape builds confidence.

“...given some of the things that necessity requires us to do, shut down traffic, block the street, do a u turn in the middle of the street, back across four lanes of traffic... that inspires more confidence. So now it doesn’t really bother me...And when I was newer there would have been a time that I just about wet my pants over a situation like that... I don’t pay attention to it now ...I’m in a big truck there’s only so much I can do here”.

So this landscape is difficult to navigate but it is also a way in which drivers can build confidence in their skills. Making their trucks “fit” in this space is a crucial element in this process. As Connor’s quote demonstrates it is also about taking over space in order to accomplish this task.

The process of mental mapping also involves concerns about safety. Safety is an ongoing issue for drivers in over the road trucking. Drivers, as a whole, face a violent workplace and their safety can be threatened in a variety of places such as truck stops, rest areas, and on the truck. Safety concerns include robbery, scams, drug trafficking, prostitution, and human trafficking. Other concerns involve violence and the transportation industry has one of the highest rates of assaults as an industry (D. Anderson, 2004). A current example of the dangers that drivers face on the road is the case of Jason Rivenburg, a truck driver who could not find a place to park at a rest area or a truck stop. So Jason pulled over at an abandoned truck stop where he was robbed and murdered in the night, leaving behind two children and a wife. The so called “Jason’s Law” is a piece of legislation that will force states to provide more safe parking for drivers.<sup>3</sup>

Edgar was robbed several times during his career. He also knows drivers who were murdered out on the road. Besides robberies, there is also a threat of cargo theft. Edgar says he feels he should be able to protect himself with a firearm.<sup>4</sup> Now Edgar’s mental map included whether or not he could carry a weapon in that state. In this next quote he describes how geography determines his route and his right to self-defense.

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<sup>3</sup> It is now common to see truck drivers parking on exit and entrance ramps on the highway because they cannot find parking anywhere else.

<sup>4</sup> It is generally interpreted that drivers can carry weapons such as handguns as long as it is legal in the various states or municipalities through which they travel. There is no federal prohibition other than a caveat saying that it should not be loaded or readily accessible from the driver’s seat.

“[On the east coast] you’re not allowed to carry weapons in the truck and I ain’t going down the highway without a weapon in the truck...I have a right to defend myself.. From Upper Florida all the way to California you have the right to defend yourself and use deadly force. You don’t have to retreat. You don’t have to run. You don’t have to get down on your knees and beg- you can shoot him if he’s set to do you bodily harm. You can carry a weapon in your truck. Unless you’re stupid with it nobody will say a thing. California is the exception. They will put you in the jail for it. I don’t run California either.”

The east coast and California are further indicted because of various state and local prohibitions against firearms. According to Edgar, the states which prohibit firearms in trucks, make drivers vulnerable to attack and a loss of dignity. Chris works in California and has also been robbed while on the road. He was actually robbed shortly before I met him. He was fixing a blown fuse in his headlights when a robber pinned him to the floor and stole everything he could reach including a jacket. Chris felt that the police did not really care about his attack and he was frustrated by the fact that drivers cannot carry weapons. Even though there are high crime rates on his I-5 route, California law is very strict on weapons in trucks. However, some drivers I spoke with adapted to these dangers with makeshift weapons like bleach in spray bottles. Others had ways of securing their truck at night by using their seatbelts to keep somebody from opening their doors. Drivers would even bring dogs out on the truck for safety.

The road clearly does not engender freedom for drivers. They are driving massive vehicles that are constrained by culture, traffic, highways, and safety concerns. However they find ways to adapt to these circumstances. When drivers talk about the varying places they go it is clear that these places are not simply dots on a map where people load and unload. On the road there is real meaning attached to the places encountered by drivers. These meanings are based on landscape, legalities, safety, and cultures. These

spatial associations lead drivers to create mental maps that help them navigate both tangible space and their associations with that space. The discursive elements found in the driver accounts of places like California and the northeast demonstrate that different drivers have different associations with these spaces. The surprising finding, which adds nuance to road literature in general, is these drivers are navigating not just by roads, climate, and the State; drivers are also navigating by the people they encounter on the road. The drivers I spoke with have mental maps that help them discern friendly people from rude people and dangerous people from safe people. In order to be safe and comfortable, these supposed ‘loners’ on the highway actually put a lot of emphasis on people in order to do their job safely and successfully. For some drivers, this information allows them to prepare for the types of personalities they will come in contact with but they cannot avoid those spaces all together. In other cases, like Edgar, this mental map allows drivers to completely avoid these negative spaces.

### **Camaraderie**

Fantasia’s *Cultures of Solidarity* (1988), makes the argument that studies of labor often leave out the everyday interactions among workers that help them build solidarity even though these associations may not always be able or willing to rise up against their employers. Maintaining solidarity in trucking is difficult given the decentralized workplace and the dearth of union representation. Drivers are no longer striking on the level of work stoppages of the 1960s, 1970’s, and 1980’s but truckers still manage to support each other and resist company exploitation.



Although the mythic heroes of the road are often portrayed as self-sufficient loners who are happily outside of society, the case of trucking shows that the freedom of the road is actually constrained by the need for human contact. I found that these rugged individuals *need* each other out on the road. Many of the people I interviewed had established friendships or even just cordial professional relationships with other drivers. Making friends or knowing other professionals in trucking is important because drivers need to be able to ask questions and get advice. Plus, it is a lonely, difficult job and finding someone to talk to can make that easier.

Before moving on to how drivers communicate with and support each other, I will briefly lay out the method of communication used in the industry. The Citizens Band (CB) radio is still a part of the popular imagination about truck drivers and camaraderie. Indeed, the CB is still an important tool for socialization, but its role in the trucking industry is changing.<sup>5</sup> Today, drivers still use the CB to talk to each other, get information about road conditions or the presence of law enforcement<sup>6</sup>. However, the CB is decreasing in its

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<sup>5</sup> In the 1970's the CB was a revolutionary tool for truck drivers and it soon became a symbol of truck driver socialization. Most drivers had CB handles, different personas, and a unique language that is differentiated by regions (Sequeira & Anderson, 2004). Movies like *Smokey and the Bandit* and *Convoy* popularized the CB in the general population as a tool for driver communications and warnings about law enforcement. Eventually, this communication form also extended into passenger cars and even homes. This interaction was immortalized in the maudlin song "Teddy Bear" by Red Sovine. This song was about a boy, with the handle Teddy Bear, who was paralyzed that talked on the CB to passing truck drivers after his own father was killed in a trucking accident. He dreamed of going for a ride in a big truck. Much to his delight, eventually all of the truckers he talked to stopped and took "Teddy Bear" for multiple rides in their rigs.

<sup>6</sup> When I was on the road with a driver in 2011, there were two fatal accidents. One accident was on I-65 north and the other was on I-65 south and both created extended wait times. Drivers were able to ask or warn other drivers about the nature of the holdup. There was a curious discourse about why the accident happened that usually involved blaming the driver for some misstep. The woman I was with commented that this practice bothers her because she feels it is insensitive. Buck also disliked driver comments about accidents. He once expressed sympathy for a driver in a fatal accident and another driver keyed the mike to say that Buck clearly had not been in the industry for very long and he needed to toughen up.

influence in the industry and the cell phone is slowly taking its place<sup>7</sup>. First, the only way you can talk to another driver on the CB is if you are near each other and going in the same direction. The cell phone is not limited in that aspect. Second, most drivers I talked to resent the profanity, racism, sexism, religious proselytizing, and just general vulgarity that is now on the CB. Truckers, that were driving during the 1970's and 1980's, say that the CB did not always feature these kinds of behaviors. According to drivers, there is also a lot of lying, fighting and threats of violence that occurs on the CB. There are also drivers who use boosters on the CB which allowed them to "walk over" (meaning drowning out) other people on the CB which is annoying. Interestingly, two drivers said that in the heyday of CB communication, drivers could "trust" what other drivers said on the CB. Now, according to these drivers, you cannot trust what people tell you on the CB. Now, cell phones have come to replace the CB communications on the road particularly for personal conversations between drivers.

While the remainder of this section will focus on socialization and emotional support amongst drivers, there are some pragmatic needs for communication among drivers. Connor is one of the less seasoned drivers that I interviewed and talking with other drivers is a necessary tool for him. He found that most drivers are very helpful. For example, he might need to get a little more information about moving the tandems on his trailer, the procedures at particular customers he is delivering to, or directions. Even seasoned drivers would contact each other to see if they missed an exit or to get

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<sup>7</sup> As a result of the CB losing favor among drivers, several drivers I talk to just kept their CB off unless they needed information about the road. As I mentioned earlier there were two fatal accidents that caused delays on the highway when I was on the road with a driver. She found that very few people even answered her request for information about the accident and many did not hear the warnings of other drivers about the delays. She felt people needed to keep their CB radios on for that very reason.

clarifications when their maps or mapping software are too vague. In another case, Patrick was able to call Joe, an older more experienced driver, about a particular sound he was hearing on the truck. Joe was able to diagnose the problem and calm Patrick who was worried he was going to have to tow the truck home.

Loneliness is an important element in a discussion about camaraderie because drivers crave socialization and need support from other drivers. Most drivers I talked to view loneliness as a negative part of their jobs. The irony about this loneliness is that drivers can possibly see hundreds of people on a daily basis but have little interaction with them. So when drivers do make a connection with people, they talk to each other as if they are best friends and then they go on their way. Buck compared these interactions with “airplane friendships” where

“you meet somebody and you spill your guts and tell them your whole life and then chances are you’ll never see them again. But at least for that many hours or 20 hours you’re running down the road...you’re like best friends...”

More specifically, some drivers want to have conversations that do not necessarily involve trucking. Cynthia described an instance where she connected with a driver over a casino buffet and ended up eating with him because he said

‘I am starved for good conversation because most of these drivers...don’t want to have a good intelligent conversation. They always want to BS.’

According to Cynthia, this man’s loneliness was compounded by a divorce and being estranged from” his children.

Talking on the phone is now a way for drivers to get support from other drivers in a decentralized industry where drivers are taken for granted by companies, customers, and the motoring public. Judith said that her company treated drivers shabbily and by talking to each other they could resist this kind of treatment. She found that drivers have to be their own “cheerleaders” and get in touch with what will motivate them because money is only one way to measure success.

“We at least have somebody to call up and say ‘..730 miles and I actually got a parking space when I got there and my alarm didn’t even go off. I didn’t even break my 14 hours’. And they’ll say ‘Damned good girl! We knew you could do it’. I call and tell my husband and he says ‘Huh?’. Call my boss he’ll say ‘Yeah that’s where you’re supposed to be’. You know I mean you’re not going to get that reward from anybody else. And that’s the kind of thing...primarily you have to give that to yourself but having friends at the end of the cell phone helps too.”.

As Judith explains, talking to other drivers is important because they are the only ones who understand what another driver is going through. Only drivers know how hard it is to drive the miles, stay within hours of service rules, drive safely, and find a parking space in a national infrastructure that does not include enough parking spaces for commercial vehicles.<sup>8</sup> As Judith says, drivers can be each other’s cheerleaders. They can also be wise counsel. For example, Judith’s friends will call her just to stay awake until they can get to their destination. Yet there are times when she just has to tell them to pull over and sleep because she can tell that they are falling asleep at the wheel.

According to Tonya, the phone lets drivers vent to each other about the frustrations inherent to their jobs.

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<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, Judith believes the real intent of regulations like the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration’s part 392.82 that bans hands held cell devices and texting, is to keep drivers “barefoot and pregnant” meaning out of touch with each other and disunited.

“...sometimes the only thing you have to go on because you get treated so terribly by your dispatchers and other companies... We have to rely on support from one another to kinda help make it through. And that’s been very important, a lifesaver in a lot of ways.”

This “lifesaver” also includes the kind of support of which Judith speaks and this support is also a form of resistance against employers. A driver will be so frustrated that he or she wants to abandon the truck or do something to damage the equipment and other drivers will convince them that it is not worth going to jail for. I also found this kind of resistance against the company in my interviews with a ragtag group of coworkers who were only united in their dissatisfaction with their company. They spent a lot of time on the phone commiserating about favoritism and manipulation by their dispatcher. This group of coworkers readily admitted that they had nothing in common with each other besides the fact they did not like their company’s management. So in an era of decentralization and exploitation all of these accounts demonstrate how drivers have been able to use camaraderie to maintain their careers and survive the indignities.

However, camaraderie has changed over the years and older drivers mourn how things were when they first started driving. I use the term older driver in this context to refer to drivers who were on the road before the Commercial Drivers License credential was mandated by the Federal government in 1992 which necessitated trucking schools that teach people how to pass the test for the CDL. Ralph and Terrance drove during the 1970’s and 1980’s and they say there was a time in which drivers felt they were a part of a community, a family even. Ralph and Terrance started driving during the regulation era when truck drivers were the “knights of the highway” and the Teamsters represented a significant portion of the trucking industry. These drivers describe this era as a time in

which drivers were united and had the time to socialize without jeopardizing their paycheck. According to Ralph from the mid to late 1970's through the early 1980's, truck drivers from various companies would travel the same roads and would often run together. This was partially fostered by lower speed limits and traveling down two lane roads. According to Ralph and Joe, drivers would even stop their trucks and wait to catch up with their buddies. When it was time to eat, they stopped and ate together. As Ralph recalls,

“You had certain truck stops that everybody knew about and you'd pull in there and there might not be anybody in there that you know. The next thing you knew, there would be five or six guys come in at one time and... we'd sit around and drink coffee and have dinner or have a piece of pie. Sit there and talk and a little while later we'd get out and go on down the road.”

The striking part of Ralph's account is that he is describing behavior that is completely normal in centralized workplaces. Coworkers socialize, have meals together, and work in the same spaces. The truck stop and the CB allowed drivers to normalize their workspace. However, Ralph says the industry has changed to the point where “everybody's on their own now” and people do not socialize as much. Ralph blames this change on deregulation because drivers now have to drive longer and harder to make a decent living, while also meeting the demands of the hours of service rules and JIT manufacturing. So drivers are on a strict schedule. Terrance's assessment of this change is more blunt. According to Terrance, the loss of camaraderie stems from the fact that drivers today only care about “making money”.

Older drivers also say that another way in which camaraderie has changed is that drivers do not help each other anymore. Terrance states the problem best when he said

“...when I first started driving a truck you could have a blowout or a flat tire, your truck break down and you wouldn’t sit the side of the road five minutes before 4 or 5 trucks [stopped] wanting to know what’s going on. [Now] you could sit the side of the road for three days and nobody [would] stop”.

Although Chris is younger than Ralph and Terrance, he is also unhappy with the loss of the “Knights of the Highway” reputation of truck drivers as well. He says common courtesies among drivers, such as moving to the other lane if a driver is on the side of the road, no longer exist.<sup>9</sup> Chris, Ralph, and Terrance all concur that truck drivers will no longer stop to help another driver to change a flat tire, for example. They blame trucking schools because they do not teach the courtesies that were a normal part of socialization when drivers were taught by other truck drivers in apprenticeship types of training.<sup>10</sup> Chris argued that trucking schools and training motor carriers fear liability so they discourage drivers from flashing another driver into the lane because someone might blame the carrier or driver if there is a wreck.

However, contrary to Ralph and Terrance’s view that camaraderie is gone, I found that drivers still make lasting friendships out on the road. Several drivers found friendships and even romantic relationships while going to trucking school. Joe met Sarah and Phil out on the road and they spend a significant amount of time together on and off the road. Joe’s wife is now best friends with Sarah. This relationship is so close that Joe actually gave his truck to Phil and Sarah after their truck was totaled in a wreck and<sup>11</sup> never even changed the title. Joe also struck up other friendships that stemmed from religious

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<sup>9</sup> Other examples of change involve the practice of “flashing in” other drivers who are changing lanes. When the truck changes lanes, it is customary for that driver to flash the trailer lights to say “thank you”.

<sup>10</sup> Trucking school only trains someone to pass the CDL test. Terrance, Joe, Ralph, and Chris were all taught in the apprenticeship style of training, prior to the emergence of the Commercial Drivers License (CDL) testing which made trucking schools a necessary part of learning to drive a truck.

<sup>11</sup>

fellowship that included Bible study and prayer with other drivers. Drivers even still use the CB for socialization. Michelle used the CB frequently to communicate with her fellow drivers and saw it as an essential part of being a driver and making friends.

Drivers even still help each other. Connor stopped to help a veteran driver who blew a steering tire.

Furthermore, the truck stop is still a place of socialization for drivers. Maya and Emilio often sit in the drivers' sections or at the counters at truck stop diners and talk with other drivers. Maya jokingly called the drivers counter as the "liars table" because drivers will share and embellish stories. She even found a boyfriend at the "liars table." Similarly, Emilio usually sits with drivers to talk to the older professionals because he wants to hear about their experiences. This is very similar to the ways in which the older, apprentice type socialization occurred in the earlier years of this industry.

Regardless of discourse that says truck drivers are independent and on their own, the truth is that drivers need each other. These workers build relationships that are crucial to weathering the ups and downs of the industry and life on the road. While it is clear that drivers like Ralph, Chris, and Terrance mourn the loss of the community they experienced as younger drivers, the camaraderie is still present on the road but it comes haltingly in different forms and through different technologies.

### **Government and Motor Carrier Surveillance**

As the quotes at the beginning of this chapter attest, drivers like the fact they do not have their boss breathing down their necks and that they do not have to sit in an office.



However, drivers are aware of that fact that this freedom on the road is increasingly hampered by revolutionary technologies available to the government and motor carriers. It should not be surprising that the government and trucking companies want to recapture control over mobile working populations. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) contend, the state is always trying to bring mobile populations within its control and it accomplishes this by restricting the flow of movement through surveillance. Similarly, in Discipline and Punish (1995) Foucault discusses the ways in which surveillance by government authorities was a tool to control ‘placeless’ people and surveillance is also a way to control workers who eventually acquiesce to being watched. Robin Leidner (1993) further explains that the company is always trying to remove control from workers through the process of routinization although sometimes these efforts can make the job easier for employees.

While trucking has always been a site of state regulation, this typically involved general legislation regulating mileage, rates, credentials, weight, and driving hours. These regulations were generally enforced by state patrol or state departments of transportation who had limited technology. There are two things that make this surveillance different from past efforts, however. First, not only is the government surveilling this mobile population but agents of capitalism, namely motor carriers, are also using these technologies to control mobility. Second, these new technological methods make it possible to observe the movements of drivers at every moment of their journey and it removes a lot of control from the drivers. It allows companies to enforce a kind of centralization that was not previously possible in this industry.

Although many industries are dealing with increased surveillance of employees, trucking is unique from other occupations in that the main selling point to a potential employee is self-reliance, seeing the country, and freedom from the traditional office and boss nearby. These new surveillance methods can be seen as a way to recreate the office on the road and reintroduce the boss into the workplace.

The trucking industry is heavily regulated for safety by the US government, specifically through various departments within the Department of Transportation (DOT). Following the events of September 11, 2001 surveillance of the industry increased. Trucks were identified by the Department of Homeland Security as a potential source for Vehicle-Borne Improvised Exploding Devices (VBIED) either by someone stealing a truck with explosive materials or planting a bomb on a truck (Schulz, 2004). As a result, drivers are routed to roads that avoid larger cities, are subject to more inspections and background checks, and fears of VBIEDs have limited places where drivers can stop to rest (Fagan, 2002).

Drivers point to the Transportation Workers Identification Credential (TWIC) as further evidence of change following this terrorist attack. TWIC started as an initiative to limit access to the nation's ports to anybody but authorized individuals that have undergone a thorough background check. Drivers have their picture taken, have their fingerprints taken, and undergo a background check. It is a flawed program that has had significant delays for people applying for the card. These cards were also supposed to be used with card readers but, according to Ralph, his TWIC card still does not work with the card readers. He also thinks that it is silly that he has to show his TWIC card and undergo a

walk around inspection at a plant where he delivers several times a week. He joked that the only good thing about it was that it gave the guards some exercise.

Ralph's company is like other companies that have chosen to require their employees to get the TWIC card at the company's expense because it gives them more access to customers and cargo. Owner operators have also participated for the same reasons.

Connor, an owner operator, got a TWIC card because it allowed him to move high value cargo from places like JFK airport. So clearly, motor carriers and drivers do not reject these kinds of regulations out of hand especially when it can result in more profit.

There are similar attitudes regarding mandated roadside inspections. Various state agencies are responsible for monitoring trucks for credentials and safety. Using both state and federal databases, weigh stations and roadside law enforcement screen trucks for these requirements. However, truck traffic on the nation's highways is at an all time high and is increasing. It is impossible for law enforcement and agencies to monitor all trucks. Furthermore, stopping and inspecting trucks delays commerce, places staffing burdens on law enforcement, and results in wasted fuel through idling and getting back up to highway speed once the truck goes through the scale. Obviously, this also adds to greenhouse gas emissions. With this in mind, the federal government has encouraged states to develop and participate in automated technologies that allow drivers and trucks to bypass weigh stations as long as they are obeying weight limits, safety laws, and credentials. This allows law enforcement to concentrate their efforts on trucks and drivers that are not obeying the law.

As a result, the government has encouraged states to use e-screening technologies that let law enforcement screen trucks in real time. Although there are other types of e-screening technologies, the best known example of these technologies is the transponder-based PrePass. PrePass is a technology that uses automated vehicle identifiers and weigh in motion scales (WIM) to screen trucks. PrePass is a joint public-private company and provides participating motor carriers and individual owner operators with small boxes that are attached to the windshield that are “read” prior to weigh stations. PrePass collects data about safety, credentials, and weight on their customers so that they can bypass weigh stations. The weigh stations are equipped with a transponder and a computer in the station that monitors the PrePass traffic. If a truck is in good standing, the box on the windshield will show a green light that tells them they can bypass a weigh station. A red light means that a truck must pull into the weigh station for further inspection. If a driver pulls into an inspection station and is not in good standing in terms of weigh, safety, and credentials, the driver faces citations, be put out of service, or impounded.

Despite the fact that companies and independent drivers are obviously opening themselves up for more surveillance by the government, companies and owner operators like PrePass because it saves money. It saves time and fuel while also making sure that state and federal laws are obeyed. Representatives of the trucking industry also speak favorably about PrePass because it is creating a level playing ground; if the laws are enforced they are not at a competitive disadvantage with companies who can underbid for customers due to not obeying the laws.

In my talk with Chris, who is an owner operator, he was positive about PrePass for all of the reasons just discussed. However, it was a double edged sword. On one hand, through the surveillance technology of PrePass, he did not have to waste time and money by rolling through a weigh station. On the other hand, the same tool could be used to catch him for speeding, for example. Chris also pointed out that there is a similar possibility with trucks that used responders at toll booths. So even though PrePass is a tool for surveillance, it has clear benefits for motor carriers and owner operators. Instead of people in this industry seeing this government encroachment on commerce or as “Big Brother” it is actually seen to be a tool for making and saving money.

However, the biggest tool for driver surveillance, Qualcomm, is totally the purview of motor carriers and works as a stand-in for the absent manager. Qualcomm allows dispatchers to communicate with drivers as well as monitor driver activities on the road such as location, route, mileage, and fuel cost. A further use of Qualcomm is that it gives directions to their delivery and pickup destinations, although Judith says Qualcomm used to have better directions. There is also an intriguing element to Qualcomm where it brings the office and centralization into the truck. An informational video on Qualcomm’s website tells motor carriers that anything they can do at a desk can be done in the cab of the truck. The same video says that Qualcomm creates a connection with drivers that will “inspire” them to feel like they are a part of their companies’ quality customer service and productivity. Another video basically states that Qualcomm is more efficient because it does things they would ordinarily have to pay employees to do.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Another interesting part of Qualcomm is that it partners with National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) send out Amber Alerts for missing children. Participating carriers allow Amber Alerts to be sent through Qualcomm to drivers. The Qualcomm dedicated a page on its website to the Amber Alert

Qualcomm allows companies to manage their highly mobile workforce from afar. It stands in for the manager and creates a kind of centralization that was not previously available to the trucking company. Qualcomm is used to keep an eye on drivers and ensures better productivity but it takes away the common sense and expertise of truck drivers. For example, many companies now rely on GPS systems to instruct drivers on the particular route that a driver is to take for a delivery. The aim is to force the driver to take the route that will get them there fastest with the least amount of money either in driver's wages or in fuel mileage. In a very real way, this takes a significant amount of control away from the driver. As Buck pointed out, GPS fails to take the driver's experience into consideration such as avoiding windy areas when a driver is hauling an empty trailer or avoiding known constructions areas. The GPS systems also do not consider that drivers need to take routes that will enable him or her to find rest areas and truck stops that will provide clean places to shower, restaurants, and parking. While some companies now have policies that ban the use of Qualcomm while driving, a couple of drivers that I talked to had dispatchers that would constantly "ping" drivers to get their estimated time of arrival. Maya claims that her dispatcher would ping her Qualcomm unit over 30 times a day. So clearly this is a technology this is used to limit driver freedom in the road.

Qualcomm is a disciplining mechanism but, like Bentham's Panopticon (Foucault, 1995), drivers are not sure how much their supervisor is watching them. Drivers readily admit that the visual surveillance of Qualcomm and GPS have a behavioral deterrent to make

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system to explain to motor carriers why they would want to participate. It states there are obvious reasons such as saving the lives of abducted children and to make the company look good in their community. However, another reason is to give drivers the chance to "Experience increased satisfaction and higher purpose (Omnitracs, 2014)" However, I spoke to a driver whose company participated in this program and he was not aware of it.

sure that a truck is only being used for company purposes and not for personal reasons such as stopping to see somebody. As Ralph put it, “You know you are being watched...and you can’t deny where you were.” Maya, wonders whether or not a panic button on Qualcomm can go both ways where her company might be eavesdropping on her. Buck also wonders if Qualcomm and GPS could be a tool for homophobia if a dispatcher found that a driver was located at a known gay spot such as the Habana in Oklahoma City.

Some drivers clearly expressed sentiments of not liking Qualcomm. Terrance who is a veteran driver that started in the 1970’s thinks that Qualcomm “stinks” because he sees this as his company saying that he cannot be trusted.

“I think if you can’t trust a man enough to put him out in your truck and let him go from Point A to Point B you should have never hired him to start with”

In a similar vein Chris thinks that Qualcomm is impersonal and is an indicator that a company is too big.

“...to me any company big enough to have Qualcomm... is when you go from being a name to being a number”.

Other drivers raise the specter of Big Brother when talking about surveillance tactics in the industry. According to Kevin, the industry tries to sell trucking by saying that a person can see the country but surveillance limits that opportunity.

“You're always being watched...Big brother is always on top of you, you can't do anything, can't do anything extracurricular. And that's the thing where I was talking about...they advertised it as you can get to go see the country. Well then you get on your surveillance and if you got off by five miles and you get a phone call. So really where are you going to go see the country? Everything you can see from the freeway”.

However, Judith agreed that the Qualcomm has elements of Big Brother but she also argued that Qualcomm “revolutionized” trucking because it improved productivity and safety. In fact, she waited three months to sign on with a motor carrier that used Qualcomm. Gone are the days of waiting around a pay phone for your dispatcher to call you with another load. You do not even have to contact your dispatcher via cell phone. If a driver breaks down then they can alert their company through Qualcomm. Also, the “panic button” on Qualcomm allows drivers to alert emergency crews of their actual location through the GPS.

Other drivers dismissed this idea of Big Brother watching you because Qualcomm is useful for drivers. As Tammy argued,

“... I thought that actually safety wise they’re good to have. Just think that if you crash somewhere on the side of a cliff or something hanging there. That Qualcomm is going to tell them exactly where you’re at and how to find you. So no it never bothered me.... Yeah [drivers] think it’s the big guy watching. Big brother or whatever they want to call him. If you ain’t got nothing to hide you ain’t got nothing to worry about. “

There does appear to be a gendered difference in these two accounts. Women, with the exception of Maya, saw the Qualcomm unit as something that was helpful in terms of communicating with their dispatcher and emergencies. Clearly Maya felt her boss used Qualcomm excessively. Most men were critical of Qualcomm although, Bill liked the safety aspects of Qualcomm and made fun of coworkers who sabotaged their Qualcomm unit. He basically implied that they were being paranoid.

Yet Qualcomm systems are so integrated into the motor carrier working environment, like Panopticon’s prisoners, drivers simply accept the fact that surveillance is a part of



their workday. There are only a few options if a driver does not like these technologies. The driver could find a company that does not have Qualcomm, go independent, or quit the industry. However, there is another option for resistance and that is to sabotage the actual unit through a variety of ways.

The use of Qualcomm is about controlling the movements of truck drivers. However, this control also increases profit for motor carriers. The industry is an important cog in the just in time (JIT) manufacturing process where product must be on time in order for the production process to continue. JIT's main benefit is for consumers who can get products in a shorter period of time. In order to meet demands of JIT, companies must find ways to develop efficient logistics in order to cut costs and increase profit. By controlling logistics motor carriers can meet the demands of their customers but they can also squeeze more profit out of the driver's labor by directing his or her routes, fuel stops, and even places to eat, sleep, and shower.

The literature on the surveillance of mobile populations focuses on the State efforts to control mobile populations. Indeed, increased surveillance of trucks after 9-11, the TWIC card, and PrePass stem from the US government's efforts to control trucks and truckers. The trucking industry and drivers found a way for this surveillance to actually be a benefit to them. The use of Qualcomm shows that keeping an eye on mobile populations can also be something that is actually taken on by non-governmental entities, namely agents of capitalism, like motor carriers. Qualcomm is a tool of surveillance that fills in for managers/dispatchers who cannot see their employees and it is gradually becoming an accepted part of being a truck driver despite fantasies about freedom on the road. Qualcomm gives dispatchers control over their highly mobile workforce routes, mileage,

as well as behavior because drivers know their boss might be watching them. There are ways to resist this tool of surveillance; this is usually done by sabotaging the Qualcomm unit. However, the most important part of Qualcomm is that it is a tool for ensuring efficiency, increasing productivity, saving money, and bringing in more profit.

## **Conclusion**

In a lot of ways, the workplace of truck drivers has changed dramatically because of a consumer focused economy where workers are forced to work harder and are watched more closely. As consumers we should be interested in these changes because they are not accidental; they are the result of efforts to increase profit and sustain a consumer based economy. Despite the fact that many of these workers love their jobs, these men and women are still out on the road risking their lives and comfort so that average citizens can get their stuff. We can also be fascinated by the ways in which these workers are able to maintain their dignity and connections with other workers despite the numerous obstacles that they face on a daily business. Finally, it should be apparent that the State and capitalists have an insatiable appetite for control over workers and that is fostered by technologies that can be quite seductive for the very workers that are being watched and controlled. In many ways, the cowboy has been tamed.

I began this chapter with quotes from drivers who praised their job as freedom from the office and the independent nature of this kind of work. However, for modern truck drivers, life on the road is anything but free. The road is marked by numerous obstacles, loneliness, and ever increasing control and surveillance by the State and trucking companies. Changes in trucking include more comfort, new communications

technologies that make it easier to stay in contact with fellow drivers, and the road is much more congested.

While mobility is often seen as a liberating experience, mobility actually produces constraints to which mobile populations must adapt. As the accounts of truck drivers explain, the realities of the open road are omnipresent interruptions of freedom such as bad weather, traffic jams, difficult terrains, as well as rude people and dangerous people. They adapt to the challenges through mental mapping of the places which they will encounter on their journey and their experience helps them prepare for the journey, feel safer and comfortable on the road, as well as build confidence.

The idea of the independent, highway cowboy is so prevalent in how drivers see themselves but that goes against the realities of the industry where drivers need each other's company and camaraderie. Some drivers mourn the loss of a time in which drivers were more connected through unionization and regulation, although I found evidence that drivers today still find ways to make contact with each other for socialization and support.

The independent nature of this job is slipping away as government and motor carriers use technological surveillance options that challenge this idea of the road being a space of freedom. True to the literature on the state and mobility, new technologies demonstrate that it is in the government's interest to control the movement of mobile populations. While tools such as the TWIC card and PrePass stem from government regulation efforts, surveillance tools like Qualcomm are used by capitalist motor carriers to establish control over their decentralized employees. However, attitudes among drivers about this

surveillance are complicated. Drivers and companies can make more money using the TWIC card and PrePass even though it allows for more government intervention. Qualcomm is a tool for companies that want to create a centralized workplace and thus increase control and productivity. However, drivers have different attitudes about this method of surveillance. On one hand, drivers say this is an example of “Big Brother” in their workplace, but it is also seen to be a useful tool that saves time for drivers and may even be used to increase safety.

So a lot has changed from when drivers like my father started in the industry although some things have stayed the same. In the next chapter, I cover a space in which truck drivers have always struggled: the home.

## Chapter 3: Home

“Well all I can say is I’m really mixed up because I’m a family man.... And I try to do stuff with the kids. Kill myself to do it... If I’m here too long I want to go someplace else and see what it looks like...But like I say... as soon as I leave the house I can’t wait to get back to see a ballgame. So, I want to go to California but I want to be home...”

Patrick

The friction between home and the road is apparent in Patrick’s description of being home but wanting to be somewhere else even though he is a dedicated father and husband. For a while he worked in another industry instead of driving, but he found himself thinking “I wonder what’s going on in Nebraska” which led him back to trucking so that he could see what was going on elsewhere. As the quote demonstrates, it is clear that even he cannot understand why he wants to be on the road so badly other than an insatiable desire to be moving and seeing other places.

For the most part, drivers talked about their home lives in contrast to life on the road. Several drivers, like Patrick, described a wanderlust that made home life difficult and sometimes confusing. They miss their families but they want to be out working, so families have to adjust their lives in order to manage being left behind.

As I mentioned in the introduction, things are changing in trucking and much of this change is based on the acceleration of a JIT and consumer based economy. In this chapter I focus on the space of the home and I argue that the home is and has always been a problematic space for truck drivers. This is no real secret. However, truckers are being worked harder and longer to meet the needs of this economy and home life suffers even

more. This chapter is ultimately a story about how mobility affects life at home and how home affects life on the road. Elements of both exist within each other. Besides the main argument, I also argue that drivers' attitudes about home tend to change during their years on the road. Essentially, home comes to be more of an idea than an actual place.

Second, I argue that drivers have tangible ways to make home on the road but the homemaking is always incomplete particularly when companies attempt to thwart those efforts to gain more control over the worker and their equipment. Furthermore, some drivers like the lifestyle of trucking while others despise it. Still others minds have changed over the years of their career. Also, I argue that being left behind at home is difficult for trucking families but some partners at home actually flourish with their new found authority and responsibilities. The distance may even save marriages.

### **Geographies of Home**

Geographers have demonstrated that home can have many meanings. Since the early 2000's geographers have taken up a serious engagement with the social constructions of home (Llewellyn, 2004) and this literature shows that home is comprised of many ideals and realities. At its most basic, home consists of two main forms: a building and/or an imagined place of attachment (Bryden, 2004; Dohmen, 2004; Harker, 2009; Morrison, 2012). Home is the primary site of social reproduction activities such as childrearing, caring for the family, and marriage (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). A home connects people to their families, ancestors, and even religious cosmology (Bryden, 2004).

Some people associate a sense of belonging and security with the home while others have decidedly negative feelings about this place. On one hand, home is a place of good

feelings, love, stability, and belonging (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Brickell, 2013; Bryden, 2004; Kothari, 2006; Low, 2008; Morrison, 2012; Reinders & Van Der Land, 2008). On the other hand, the home can be boring and dangerous. This is a site of work and limitation for women who face many responsibilities (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Domosh & Seager, 2001; Harker, 2009). It is often thought to be sedentary and thus boring. Finally, contrary to the notion that home is a safe place, homes can be sites of violence whether that be through domestic violence, war, or crime (Blunt, 2005; Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Blunt & Varley, 2004; Brickell, 2012; Harker, 2009).

Another argument regarding geographies of the home is that home can be exclusionary. It is a space of identity formation (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Reinders & Van Der Land, 2008) and identity constructs such as race, class, gender, and sexuality (Waitt & Gorman-Murray, 2011; A. Williams, 2002). As such, this is place in which people can discern us from them (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Bryden, 2004; Reinders & Van Der Land, 2008). Marginalized people, such as women of color, home gives refuge from racism they face when they are outside of the home (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). It can also be a place to protect your family from those deemed undesirable, such as racial minorities or the poor (Low, 2008). This can be a place of tension and exclusion for those who are not heterosexual such as LGBT persons (Gorman-Murray, 2006, 2008; Mills, 2003; Reinders & Van Der Land, 2008). On the other hand, Gorman-Murray (2011) has argued that home is not necessarily homophobic either. Home can also be a space that is affirming of LGBT identities (Oswin, 2010).

The home is a place that people long for when they have migrated or are frequently away (Kristeva, 2001). In some cases, this longing is combined with a sense of guilt for leaving

people behind at home. However, leaving home is a way for a person to gain respect by making money, gaining knowledge, and proving their mettle by confronting dangerous and unknown places like the city (Cassiman, 2008). Being away from home also allows people to reinvent themselves and challenge the norms of their home (Waitt & Gorman-Murray, 2011). Home is often seen as a place of moral fortitude and heteronormativity (Morrison, 2012; Oswin, 2010). Therefore, being away from home is often blamed for individuals going astray from family values or used as an excuse for engaging in risky behavior (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Keough, 2006; Kristeva, 1991). People away from home may find a new freedom to explore things like their sexuality.

Regardless of whether a person has positive or negative feelings about their physical home, there is still a desire to create a feeling of well being and stability that is associated with the home. The loss of home can be an intensely emotional experience because it can mean a loss of refuge, individual identity, and the identity of family (Harker, 2009).

However, humans have a remarkable capability to adjust to new circumstances and new formations of home (Reinders & Van Der Land, 2008). Being in an actual physical home is not always possible, or even desirable, yet people still search for ways to reproduce those feelings of stability through 'stretching space' or creating the private within public (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Gorman-Murray, 2006). Evidence of the process can be seen in the ways in which people decorate space when they are away from home for an extended period of time. People will often use pictures, furniture, and items that will remind them of home (Ryan, 2006). These makeshift homes provide shelter and continuity in the often unpredictable and uncomfortable circumstances of mobility which helps improve attitude



and self-respect (Baer, 2005; Ryan, 2006). Similarly, religious artifacts and practices also give those who are away from home a sense of peace and belonging (Tolia-Kelly, 2004).

### **What Is Home?**

The home can be a building as well as an ideal imbued with many of the values that we associate with home life: stability, love, and support (Bryden, 2004; Dohmen, 2004; Harker, 2009; Morrison, 2012). I found that life on the road changed drivers' concepts of home and it no longer means a physical structure. Home is about people who know you and accept you. Home became the location of their loved ones and community.

My respondent, Conner, said

“I guess home's where the people that matter to you are. It's not so much about structure or a location anymore. It's where the people are that matter to me.”

Conner's time on the road has enabled him to view home differently. It is no longer about a building called home, home is now about family. Earline's home means where her friends are who have provided her with extensive support following her divorce and while she was on the road. She basically got tired of being away from those people so she got a job closer to home. Also, Earline's concept of home stretched into her community where she teaches Sunday school and serves in local government.

Maya's comments about home are similar to those of Earline and Conner, as she started to realize that home is where she felt she belonged, whether than be in the Northwest where her family lived or in New Mexico, the location of her Native tribe.

“It’s like the definition that some people give you... home is the place where they can never kick you out permanently no matter what you do. They always have to take you back”.

As this quote indicates, the crucial element for home making was a space where you were accepted unconditionally.

In a similar vein Bill described home as a place where people recognize him and he recognizes them. He engages in a kind of homemaking where he memorizes faces and goes to the same places each time. This provides a sense of stability in a job where he is constantly moving from place to place and face to face.

“Because ...in the trucking world...in a world of millions of millions of faces you’re the only one that cares about you. And all one person has to do is recognize you and you feel more at home. You feel more at ease. You feel more comfortable in a situation. No matter where you’re at. What you’re doing. It’s just comfortable being known.”

Being at home also means that people know who you are and care about you, which invoke traditional discourses regarding home. The consequence of nobody knowing who you are is illustrated by Bill’s story of a severe head injury where he had to ask for help from total strangers. It was a complicated affair of knowing nobody, bleeding profusely, having to take a chance and ask a stranger for help, having to unhook and hook up a trailer so that he could get to the hospital, and driving bobtail (meaning without a trailer) to a hospital. While someone was willing to help him do all of those things for him, Bill points out the reality that it would have been much easier had he been at home and known somebody that truly cared for him.

These changing attitudes about home are directly related to life on the road. According to drivers, because of their experiences on the road, home is now more of an ideal than a concrete place. It is where people know you and take care of you.

### **Making Home on the Road**

Although it is clear that drivers see home in a more abstract sense, they still have to contend with the physical and tangible realities of being away from home. Humans are very skilled at adapting new spaces for home (Reinders & Van Der Land, 2008) and they often find ways of replicating home while they are mobile because they seek the stability associated with home and normalcy (Baer, 2005; Ryan, 2006; Tolia-Kelly, 2004). Also the line between home and work is often blurred (Pringle, 1989) although truck drivers are an extreme case. In the case of truck drivers, they seek to delineate their home space and work space within their trucks. In many ways, drivers are trying to mimic social reproduction while they are on the road. However, creating home is always incomplete because drivers are still at work despite efforts to demarcate home from work. Also, there is some nuance between the domesticity of owner operators and the domesticity of company drivers. Owner operators have more authority and control over how they establish comfort in their trucks. Company drivers generally do not have this kind of control. Essentially, the truck is contested space and it is a site of struggle between drivers and their employers who are always seeking to gain more control over their workers and their equipment.

Drivers described processes of creating homelike comfort in their trucks. Some drivers carried refrigerators, microwaves, coffee makers, and hot plates because food is expensive on the road. Drivers also had TVs, DVDs, and special comforters and pillows. Drivers who had a family and children carried things like stuffed animals that belonged to their children or other little mementos. One driver even put in parquet flooring in his truck.

A lot of drivers also felt that the cleanliness of their truck was an important part of living in that place. Tonya swept and cleaned her truck regularly because she wanted to keep her home and office space tidy and organized. Tammy said that she and her husband kept their “baby” clean because “she” made them money. Another driver only cared about cleaning the interior of his truck but ignored the outside. I would argue this was a way for the driver to differentiate the outside as belonging to the company and the inside belonging to the driver.

Yet these efforts at creating home will never offer what drivers called the “little things” that they miss on the road like private showers at home, not having to get dressed to go to the bathroom, bologna sandwiches, and sleeping in their own bed. As a result, Jennifer said that being home now feels like a vacation.

Clearly, trucks become personal home-like spaces for drivers which is a complicated task if someone is driving a company vehicle; they are working and living in spaces that belong to a corporation. If a driver’s truck needs mechanical repairs companies will usually have that person take another truck. Having someone else drive your truck, or having to drive someone else’s truck, is a bit of a nightmare for drivers because of the

nature of personal space. Ralph said that it sends him “up a wall” to switch out trucks. The driver is sitting, sleeping, and eating in a space that is lived in by another person’s body. In many cases, a driver is essentially sharing a bed with people he or she does not know. That person might not have the same hygiene standards as another driver. Another driver drove Judith’s truck for a period of time and when she got her truck back, she found that some sort of insect infested her truck which forced her to fumigate her truck for pests before going back out in that truck.

According to Judith, companies know that drivers resent switching trucks and they will use that as a way to punish drivers who are out of favor. For example, at Judith’s company, if a driver is off work for more than 3 days, she has to turn the truck in. So it can be a punishment for taking a break. While Ralph argued that switching trucks was about making sure that all trucks are making money he agreed that this could be a disciplinary tool used by management to control drivers.

Although truck drivers attempt to create the physical comforts of home, they are still at work when they are on the road. While the geographic literature makes it clear that it is natural for humans to engage in homemaking to provide more comforts and stability, these experience of truck drivers demonstrates that efforts at creating home in their trucks are always incomplete. Obviously, owner operators more control over their trucks and schedules. However, for company drivers, their trucks become a site of struggle with the employer who wants to maintain control over their trucks and their drivers. As a result, the company can erase homemaking efforts by forcing drivers to switch trucks.

## **Escape from Home**

Many of the drivers that I spoke with exemplified Kristeva's (1991) contention that people associate the sedentary life at home with boredom while mobility is life giving. At the same time people on the move may still long for home. However, some drivers enjoy the lifestyle of trucking but as this section will demonstrate, there are drivers who are fed up with life on the road. Also, although this is seldom acknowledged in the discourse about drivers being away from home, the road may allow people to escape unpleasant realities at home.

When I asked Michelle about whether she missed home or not, she described the feeling of wanting to be home but wanting to be on the road that I heard from other drivers.

Essentially, as this quote attests, being on the road is an addictive liminality.

“Oh yeah [I missed home]. But when I was home I missed the truck. I had it pretty bad. It's kind of like a disease. It's weird. It's a love hate relationship with the truck. You love the truck and you love your job but you hate your job.”

Michelle is saying that she has no control over her need to be moving despite the fact that she got homesick. She describes her wanderlust as a disease, something that takes over her body that she cannot control.

Earlier in his career, Ralph has similar feelings as Michelle and Patrick. On one hand, he missed his family and he felt guilty about being gone from home so much. On the other hand Ralph really liked his job. He loved driving, he had friends, he had a secure job, and he felt like he was accomplishing something. He liked home but at the same time the road

was right where he wanted to be. However those feelings changed over time. As Ralph explained,

“I halfway enjoy what I’m doing but I really enjoy just being at home and not being gone. Actually the most enjoyment is when you get home...Used to, it was the excitement of going and now it’s the excitement of getting home.”

For Ralph, there is really no waffling here. The road does not appeal to him very much anymore; he wants to be home. The following quote provides a striking reason for this change. Keep in mind that Ralph started driving in his early twenties in an era of widespread union representation through the Teamsters, where truck drivers were revered cowboys and outlaws who were out to have a good time while earning a respectable living.

“...when you’re young it’s an adventure. And it’s something new. And now it is...it’s a job. It’s...not the adventure it used to be... when I started out, you were sort of carefree and [got to] see what you can get away with and there’s a lot of things to experience but now its...you realize that you can’t just go out and have a good time. There’s too many other people, objects that you’ve got to watch out for...it’s not fun and games like you originally thought it was... You have to watch out for yourself to protect everybody else.”

Home is now more appealing for Ralph because the road is not fun anymore and it does not have the excitement of youthful adventure. Now, the adventure has been tempered. The road presents dangers such as the dramatically increased traffic volume that could end Ralph’s life and the lives of other motorists. Home is an easier place to be now.

Another respondent, Jennifer, had similar feelings as Ralph. She and her husband enjoyed

trucking initially but now they want to get off the road. Unfortunately, they cannot financially afford to go back home.

There are also drivers who resent their time away from home and simply hate their jobs. Jonathan came to trucking after being laid off from his previous job where he was a foreman. Trucking was the only option because he lived in a region that was in severe decline because of deindustrialization and he needed a job that would provide a similar salary amount as his previous job. Jonathan dislikes his job because it takes him from his home and he specifically said that the only positive part of his job was getting a paycheck. He and his wife have chosen a particular standard of living and he has to stay on the road if they are going to maintain that. So we see from these two accounts that while some drivers love their time on the road, there are those drivers who are only doing this for a paycheck and they resent not being at home.

However, in some cases drivers do not miss home at all. Neil liked the road better than home. Most drivers that I talked to described a paradox where they loved their jobs because it gave them freedom and independence but they still disliked the aloneness that often comes from being away from home and independent. Neil loved that part. In fact, he loved the job and being alone so much that he almost lost his home life and wife. This quote explains Neil's love for the road best because he describes what would have happened if had chosen the road over his home. He essentially says that he loved trucking so much that he wanted to do it until he died.

“I knew what would happen. I would go back on the road and I would drive truck after truck after truck and someday someone would find me in the sleeper and I'd



be dead. And I'd probably have a smile on my face and that would be that. I loved it that much..."

As the following quote shows, his alone time in the truck gave him the opportunity to work stuff out in his head.

"You can solve your problems. You can solve the world's problems. You can laugh. You can sing. You can cry. You can say anything you want. Who's going to know?"

This is another interesting part of Neil's account because other drivers, Buck for example, said that the extensive time alone is actually a bad thing for drivers because it gives a person *too much time* to think about things and allow negative thoughts to fester unabated by another perspective.

Neil also talked about the road in ways that we normally describe being home. Consider the following quote:

"I used to really get into night driving because you're even more in your cocoon. In a sense you're back in the womb where everything is warm, safe, and comfy".

In contrast to the rhetoric about the road being a place full of danger and home being a safe place, Neil actually saw the road as a place where he was comfortable and safe.

So when Neil's wife demanded he not be gone for so long (the longest he was gone was five weeks) or to go out on the road with him, he resented her interference. The truth is that he did not want to go home even though he loved his wife.

"...she said 'when are you going to come home ? [I thought] 'I don't really give a damn, lady'. I don't wanna be home'. And then she started saying she wanted to

come with me. And at first I said ‘no’ and then she would insist...and all I could think of was “you're not getting in the way of the best thing I've ever found for my solitude that is so important to me.”

Going back home to be with his wife would end his life on the road. He resisted taking his wife on the road because he clearly did not want his home life to interfere with his life on the road that basically became his home.

Neil is acutely aware that his addiction to being alone in the truck was problematic. At several points during our talk he felt the need to say that he did not have the negative qualities we normally associate with loner types such as “anti-social or dangerous,” “people hater or psychopath,” or having “kids buried in the basement.” I would argue that his need to examine this loner tendency stems from naturalizing discourses that locate normalcy within sociality and fixed spaces such as the home.

I also talked to drivers who found that their time on the road gave them an escape from home and its challenges. Connor liked the fact that if there were problems at home he could just tell his wife that he could not deal with an issue because he was off to work. Sometimes families enable this escapism by not giving them bad news while they are on the road. For example, Jonathan’s wife did not tell him that his mother died until he got home.

Josie had a similar experience as Connor where she liked the fact that she could escape from home issues. Realistically she could not do much when she was on the road so she really did not want to hear bad news from home.

“...when you call home and you’re on the road it’s like ‘ Just tell me your day’s going good and don’t tell me any negative things ‘cause I don’t want to know. I can’t do anything anyways.

The other part of Josie’s story is that her mother was informed that she had lung cancer. This happened while she was out on the road and being on the road allowed her to forget that her mother was dying back home.

The road was also an escape for Buck. He spoke of the fact that being on the road sheltered him from the AIDS epidemic. He found that the road was an excellent way to get out of romantic relationships at home that were not working. It produced a stopgap where once the newness of a relationship starts to wear off he could just get back on the road. However, he has since realized these scenarios and coping mechanisms limited his ability to effectively deal with conflict in interpersonal relationships.

Although many drivers enjoy being on the road, driver attitudes about home and the road change over time. Many drivers dislike the loneliness and being away from home while other drivers cherish that time alone. Being on the road helps drivers live in a sort of denial about problems they are facing at home. There is also the reality that even though a driver might be at home, that time is often overshadowed by preparing for getting back out on the road. So, again, the division between home and work are blurred in this industry.

## **A Home Discombobulated**

Some of the literature on mobile populations focus on what the traveler gains from being on the road such as skills and money (Cassiman, 2008) and other literature emphasizes the negative effect it has on families (Keough, 2006; Nóvoa, 2012). In the case of trucking, families and drivers suffer because of the impossible demands of companies and the JIT manufacturing process. In fact, companies attempt to keep drivers out on the road for as long as possible regardless of the needs of their employees. As a result, truckers believe that their absence is destructive to their home but they justify their time on the road as essential for financial stability. These drivers feel guilty about their absence yet they also find that there is a disconnect between their lifestyle and the lifestyle of their sedentary family. However, I found that this lifestyle can actually have benefits for those left at home.

Drivers are so ensnared by their company's demands and control that they cannot even get home in emergencies. In my discussions with truck stop chaplains, I heard stories about companies not telling their employees about home emergencies until after they delivered a load. Sometimes companies will tell a driver they will lose their jobs if they go home to attend to family needs. The state police had to locate Buck to tell him that his grandfather was dying because his company refused to inform him after his family called. Buck's company then said he would be fired if he went home. There is even a well known "myth" that dispatchers will intentionally send you somewhere away from where you want to be. Tonya's company would invariably send her in the opposite direction of her home when she needed to be there even if it was for medical treatment.

Even when drivers are at home, they are still working. In some ways the home becomes a kind of truck stop where drivers stop long enough to get ready for getting back out on the road. Consider this quote from Tonya.

“...everything becomes trucking and little by little your family and friends kinda disappear because by the time I get in I have to clean out all of my stuff out of the truck and freshen it up and then reloaded it and that’s just enough time to do that. So I don’t have any time to really spend with family and friends. Trucking consumes you.”

As Tonya’s account explains, even though a driver may have some home time it is still dominated by preparing for getting back out on the road. She does not have time to enjoy being at home. My father prepares for the road like Tonya. He is generally brusque and hurried and it is best to stay out of his way. Connor admitted that he behaved in a similar manner and his family does not understand why.

“My kids don’t understand that. My wife doesn’t understand that. I’ve got to leave because I’ve got to pick up here, deliver there, whatever it is, at whatever time. I don’t like poking around. I’m like “Get the hell out of my way. I’ve got to go.” I’m stressed, I’m screaming...[my son says] “Good god Dad chill out.” There’s two times in the trucking industry. There’s early and there’s late. If you’re on time you’re late. You don’t know when you’re going to have a flat tire, traffic’s going to stop, whatever.”

Connor also feels that his family at home does not understand what he deals with out on the road. Connor described an incident where he had equipment problems which threw off his schedule and he called his wife enraged. She kept trying to tell him to calm down and to just stop and have a sandwich since he had not had anything to eat for over 12 hours. He got even angrier because he felt like she did not understand what he was facing. For example, he could not just stop somewhere to get food because he is in a huge

vehicle that has limited parking options. A drive-through at a place like McDonalds is not an option either.

So it is hard for people who live a sedentary life at home to understand the behavior of people who live on the road. Drivers like Tonya, my dad, and Connor are “consumed” and irritable at home because they are trying to create some normalcy and establish control for what they might encounter on the road which is an unpredictable place to be.

Families face difficult consequences of having a family member or loved one that is away from home so much. Neil described a common scene at a truck stop restaurant,

“You would hear conversations with guys talking to their wives, yelling with their wives, you know there's a problem at home, there's a problem with the kid, the kid got in trouble at school, or some people say the refrigerator is broken, washing machine breaks and you're not there”.

Sometimes family members are angry about their circumstances. Tonya is divorced and has two daughters. Her younger teenage daughter lives with her adult daughter. Tonya describes the daughters as “kind of resentful.” They are angry about the amount of time that she spends away from home. When she gets home they are resistant to spending time with her and the youngest daughter has refused to go out on a trip with her.

I found that when family members complained about the absence of their truck driving family members, drivers would simply counter this by saying that their work is what puts food on the table. In many ways, I would argue this discourse is a way for drivers to assuage guilty feelings about their absence from home. So when Tonya, for example, encountered her sullen teenage daughter when she got home she would simply say ‘Well

when you run low on cash and you need some cash who's there for you?" Connor had a similar take on his wife's initial dislike for his job where he found that she became more supportive once they were able to regain some financial security that they had lost. Ralph also did not think his wife was "overly supportive" but, as this quote explains, she just had to get used to it, again, because that is how money came into the house.

"...what was your choice? You've gotta do what you've gotta do. You learn a trade and that's what's bought the bread and paid the light bills... it's your livelihood and whether you're supportive of it or not ...it still had to be done."

Bill missed a lot with his children especially in the early years of driving because he was usually gone 5 weeks or more at a time. He was even on the road when his daughter was born. The absence of a parent can be confusing. Sam realized he had to get off the road when his then three year old asked her mother "Where does Daddy live?" Even after he quit driving she would still get anxious any time that he would spend the night somewhere else because she worried he was going back out on the road.

A lot of times partners are left to run a home and raise children by themselves because their partner is gone most of the time. Patrick's wife struggled with the responsibilities left to her while he was gone. Sometimes she was okay with the situation but other times it made her emotional. Patrick had to talk his wife through a vehicle repair over the telephone because there was nobody to help her and taking the van to a mechanic was too expensive. He also made a very true statement about what it is like to have a husband gone from home so frequently; he called her a single mother. From the quote below, you

can see that Patrick is aware of what his wife goes through and he respects her ability to keep going even when he is not there.

“She’s basically a single mother. She does what a single mother has to do. And she gets up and gets the kids to school or to the babysitter. She’s at work on time. But you know she’s not going to work crying about it”.

While some drivers like Connor think their family members do not understand their lifestyle, I found that many spouses understand all too well and they sacrifice their comfort and companionship because they know their partner loves their job. Joe recalls the time that his wife realized he needed to go back out on the road:

“[Donna] knows me better than I know myself...I sat down and I hadn’t said a word. She brings me a glass of tea. I’m sitting there, it’s hot, summer time. I’d been hauling asphalt all day. She says “Honey, I packed your suitcase today.” I said “Why’d you do that?”. She said “I see it in your eyes. Your heart’s out there.”

So even though a spouse may prefer their partner to stay home, at least in Joe and Donna’s case, they are willing to go through those struggles because they want their spouse to be happy. Donna instinctively knew that driving locally was not the right job for her husband. And being happy means being “out there” on the road and away from home. In a similar vein Tammy had to stop driving team with her husband for health reasons. However, when her husband said that he wanted to be back out on the road she became his business partner. Instead of driving she stayed home to deal with the paperwork for owner operators such as taxes, fees, and registrations.



The ability for these women to adapt to living alone and raising children on their own, while also supporting their husbands, who want to do the very job that takes them away from them, makes these women the unsung heroes of this occupation. I am reminded of a t-shirt that I saw in a truck stop (and bought for my mother) that read “The hardest job is being a truck driver’s wife.” This idea of being a “truck driver’s wife” (or child) also elucidates that a person’s occupational identity does not exist solely at the physical place of work. It carries over into the home and into the family.

Not all partners are supportive. Cynthia’s girlfriend of three years hated being alone and they eventually broke up because Cynthia wanted to start driving long haul rather than local. Cynthia described her ex-girlfriend as being “jealous of the truck” because she thought Cynthia loved the job more than her. Buck lost a lot of friends because he was gone so much and could not keep in touch with them in an era before cell phones which other drivers say are so important for communication with friends and family now. Buck even had boyfriends who emptied his checking account while he was gone or just start dating other men without telling him.

A lot of the informants that I spoke with focused on the negative effects that trucking has on their home and family. However, I found several instances of positive adaptations to this life style among those who are left at home. It can be empowering to be in charge and partners may grow to like their new role. Partners can become more independent, sometimes dramatically so. Joe’s wife, Donna, described a lifelong struggle with shyness. According to Donna, her shyness was so pronounced, that when she would visit Joe’s family she would say “Hello” and “Goodbye” but never engaged in conversation with

them. Initially, she cried every time that Joe went back out on the road. But Donna was basically forced to overcome that shyness in order to survive being by herself. She now describes herself as stronger and so outgoing that nobody can “shut [her] up.” Indeed, she was so comfortable talking with me, I was surprised to hear about this struggle with shyness. Joe said that even though his wife struggled initially, he jokes that now “she sings when she’s packing my suitcase”.

According to Connor, his wife was resistant to living life without her husband around but she has taken on more responsibility and is more adjusted to the lifestyle, particularly after seeing that his work was paying off by alleviating a precarious financial situation. Terrance said his wife had to assume the role of manager in the house and she has kept that role even after he retired.

The absence of one partner might even make marriages last longer. Ralph, married 43 years, said that if he got off the road earlier in his career, it would have probably “made for a short marriage.” Consider this quote from Edgar, married for 26 years, where he also says that being gone so much made for a more harmonious marriage.

“When I’m on the road all the time we don’t have enough time to argue. We’re never together. You stay out a couple of months at a time all of the sudden you find yourself home. Arguing is the last thing on your mind. You’re just glad to have somebody to hold your hand when you stay in the truck that long”.

What is not typically acknowledged among truck drivers is that loved ones left at home can also undergo positive adaptations especially for those who are left at home. Spouses gain confidence and learn to enjoy their new found authority. Yet, many drivers harbor

guilt about putting their families through these struggles so they find ways to justify their absence by saying that being gone is what puts food on the table. At the same time, being gone from home may even provide a buffer for conflict among spouses.

## **Conclusion**

There are four main conclusions about the workplace for this chapter. The first is that workplace can be a site of struggle between labor and domesticity. Second, the occupational identities of workers have an effect on families at home. Third, not everybody likes their job and they do not identify with the culture of their workplace. Finally, while these kinds of developments are usually associated with the space of work, home can be a site of personal growth and increased self-confidence.

Every driver that I interviewed talked about the fact that they regret being away from home for long periods of time and they missed spending time with their family. In my own family, it is clear that my dad feels a certain amount of guilt for being out on the road and missing parts of my childhood. On the other hand many drivers stay out on the road because they love their job. They choose to go back out there each and every time. Some drivers, though, do not want to be out on the road but they are stuck out there because of financial responsibilities and the lack of similar paying jobs where they live. What has changed over the years, however, is the fact that drivers are working harder and longer to meet the demands of a consumerist economy. Fulfilling consumer wants comes at the expense of families whose loved ones may be on the road for a month or even more.

This chapter began with Patrick trying to explain his ambivalence about living such a mobile existence while leaving his family behind. Previous literature on home has acknowledged that mobility has an effect on home life but this study provides concrete ways in which the road finds its way into the home and home finds its way onto the road. These accounts show that life on the road has clear consequences for life at home.

The road transforms home for drivers because they realize that it is more of an idea rather than an actual building. Much of this stems from the fact that drivers must make home while they are on the road. That process includes adjusting to the impersonal nature of public space like truck stops and the fact that they are making home in the same space as their workplace.

There is also a certain amount of disconnect between drivers and their families because the truth is that many of these drivers want to be out on the road even though they miss their families. Drivers also feel that their families ultimately do not understand their workplace. Families cannot understand why their loved one stays out on the road especially when their time at home is often consumed with getting ready for the next load. At the same time, family members understood all too well how their loved one was consumed with trucking and sacrificed their own comfort because they knew he or she wants to be out there.

Plus, good things come out of this mishmash of home and the road. Women find themselves in charge of their home while their partner is on the road. This separation forces partners to depend on themselves which leads to more confidence and self-

reliance. Time away from each other may save a marriage. The road can also insulate a driver against the painful realities of home.

So on one hand, trucking has detrimental effects on life at home but it can also result in positive changes for the people who are left at home. At the same time, the accounts of drivers and their families show that while we often speak of the road and home as discrete, binary opposites the home is really a product of everything that is going on outside of that physical space. The road is just as much a part of home as the home is a part of the road. For trucking families, everything at home depends on what is happening on the road.

In the next chapter, I examine the images of truck drivers. Here we have a case where companies are trying to hire more drivers to meet the demands of a driver shortage but they have a serious image problem. This image features negative and hurtful stereotypes that drivers are constantly trying to contain and refashion.

## Chapter 4: Image

“... they generally think fat and scruffy, baseball hat, beard, big pot belly, [and] flannel shirt. Jeans hanging down, buttcrack showing... When I meet them I tend to think ignorant. Or redneck...hillbilly. Or maybe a little lack of self- respect... If somebody's not taking care of their body that shows a lack of self- respect. The lack of professionalism is another thing. They're dressed scruffy and they're not clean and I tend to think of them as less professional than the people who are. They may be fantastic drivers. I don't know. That image gives me that impression that they're less.”

Cynthia

This quote came out of a lengthy interview with Cynthia that included a discussion about image and how the public views truck drivers. She was able to succinctly describe the kinds of stereotypes that drivers have talked about throughout this study. Drivers are supposedly unkempt, fat, and dirty. Cynthia's response gives a concise description of problematic bodies in this workplace and highlights how drivers are concerned about image. Her response is full of judgment about class, place of origin, body image, self worth, and work ethic. Regardless of how skilled these drivers are, if their bodies do not fit a certain standard then their work is automatically assumed to be substandard. So not only are these unprofessional bodies, they are unintelligent bodies. Furthermore, these bodies are evidence of a moral failing where a person is careless with social norms that deem personal hygiene as an important marker of civilization.

Cynthia is monitoring other driver bodies in an effort to distance herself from negative images through calls for professionalism. Interestingly, Cynthia is not only describing how outsiders view truck drivers but also how drivers see each other.

In this chapter, I argue that there is another change in the industry and that is image problem which drivers believe have gotten worse over time. Throughout my interviews with truck drivers, they expressed frustration over working in a stigmatized industry with stigmatized bodies. In fact, the experiences of truck drivers demonstrate how occupation can be read from the body because the body featured prominently in these discussions.

This is a really dirty job but this job's schedule and mobility makes it difficult to maintain even basic hygiene and living standards. Driver solidarity is harmed by this image problem because many drivers resent the negative images of their workplace and seek to distance themselves from other drivers who perpetuate those images. For some drivers this results in a near constant effort to prove they are not *that* kind of truck driver. They do this through claims of professionalism and their importance to the national economy. Drivers also believe that their job and knowledge is devalued by the public because of this image problem. However, it is not totally clear if people do look down on these drivers and I explore surveys and online postings to determine the variations of attitudes about truck drivers. Since this image could be a turn off for potential truck drivers, the industry is also involved in eliminating the negative associations with this workplace.

The narrative of this chapter begins with a discussion about driver bodies, their contact with customers and their contact with other drivers. Following that, the chapter examines the interactions of driver bodies on the highway and passenger cars as well as the ways in which the media perpetuates negative portrayals of truck drivers. The chapter concludes with ideas on how the industry is working to combat these negative images.

## **Bodies and Dirt**

Scholars have demonstrated that the body is socially constructed and as such it is a site of identity performances that include race, class, gender, sexuality, physical ability, and age (Bale, 1996; Butler, 1999; Hall, 2000; Malam, 2008; Mowl, Pain, & Talbot, 2000). Glenn (2007) described the body as a “cultural map, a mode of interpreting the relationship between physical characteristics and social potentials.” So the body is often “read” to determine individual and intersectional identities.

Clearly the body is also made up of a physical materiality that suffers from disease (Hall, 2000), engages in labor (Boris, 1998; Butz & Leslie, 2001; Leslie & Butz, 1998), changes in shape (Bordo, 1993; Colls, 2006, 2007; Guthman, 2009; Herrick, 2007; Longhurst, 2001), and even gives birth (Boswell-Penc & Boyer, 2007). Also, the physical body is a primary way in which we differentiate ourselves from others. People get anxious over touching and leakage (Kristeva, 1991) because it is an invasion of personal space (Longhurst, 1995). People must be clean with no body odor, bad breath, gas, or fluids (Holliday & Hassard, 2001) and people who cannot control their bodies are offensive and uncivilized. Dirty bodies are usually derided and excluded in western culture.



## **Dirty Work**

In this chapter I utilize a body of literature regarding dirty work because it explains why trucking is stigmatized and it explains how and why drivers manage negative images of their occupation. While there are exceptions (Brody, 2006; Dyer, McDowell, & Batnitzky, 2008) there has not been a lot of literature that examines ‘dirty work’ in geography. Dirty work refers to jobs that have been stigmatized and this stigma is usually based on the fact that workers in a job have contact with filth such as bodily waste, morally suspect activities like bill collection (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Brody, 2006), or death (Bolton, 2005). Workers are usually very aware of the negative image of their job and it bothers them (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). In some cases, these jobs are also low status and contain a lot of work that is unpaid (Dyer et al., 2008) Physical injuries are also prevalent in these jobs (Stacey, 2005). This status can have a social effect as people may ask hurtful questions, avoid people in these jobs, and even dismiss their jobs as being the only thing these workers can do (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Workers may feel like they are treated inhumanely or as if they are stupid (Stacey, 2005).

As this chapter will demonstrate, drivers’ contact with dirt and dirty spaces plays a role in negative attitudes about truck drivers and the negative attitudes drivers have about themselves. In many ways, defiled bodies are the norm in trucking. Trucking is a unique case because in most labor scenarios a worker can go home and clean themselves in private. Truckers are limited in how they can get clean after a day of work. Also truck drivers encounter dirty spaces throughout their workplaces from truck stops and rest

areas, warehouses, and even dirty bodies that result from difficult schedules and a lack of facilities.

However, the missing piece in explaining this phenomenon is mobility. This is a highly mobile occupation and mobility is often seen to be dangerous because it is inherently a process that crosses boundaries. Truck drivers are often anonymous, mysterious, and strangers to the people they encounter throughout the day. In many cases, these boundaries dovetail with moral boundaries that separate pure space from defiled space and civilized from uncivilized (Sibley, 1995). David Sibley (1995) argues that western society has a tendency to use these mental geographies to map and categorize the bodies of people, particularly those who frequently cross moral, physical, or geographic boundaries. In some cases, groups of people are spatially segregated to prevent the clean space/people from being defiled (Sibley, 1995). In most cases, stereotypes are deployed to justify this ordering of people and space. Stereotypes are filled with a dual sense of romanticism (Hammer, 2002) and repulsion on the part of the person using such tropes and almost always involve ideas about dirt, perceived danger, sexuality and disease (Sibley, 1995).

### **Dirty Bodies: Geographies of Getting Clean**

The most important identifier for dirty work is the association with abjection (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Indeed, truck drivers come in contact with a lot of dirty places. Dirt, dust, and oil are omnipresent in this workplace. There is sweat and smells from physical labor. Drivers' hygiene practices take place in semi-public spaces. The truck stops that they frequent are also spaces of abjection because there are often drugs, sex, theft, and assaults

within this space. Also the cleanliness of truck stops is in question even in the dining spaces. Just recently, my father saw cockroaches in a diner and the waitress was fairly blasé about the presence of insects in her workplace. Trucking has also been on television shows called *Dirty Jobs* and there is a band called Dirty Truckers. So trucking is very dirty for a lot of reasons. As a result of all of this dirt, drivers are very concerned about getting clean and their main audience is customers and other truck drivers. However, as this section will show, it is not easy to get and stay clean because to some extent, drivers lose control over their bodies while they are on the road.

Truck drivers cannot dress, maintain cleanliness, or even go to the bathroom like they would off of the road because of mobility, schedules, and the availability of facilities. Throughout interviews with truck drivers, they spoke of living in bodies that faced the challenge of a mobile existence that included troubles with getting and staying clean. Their concerns included whether or not they smelled okay and if they are dressed appropriately.

“Sometimes I get stuck in a shipper for a day and a half. Recently I was stuck down in Plainview Texas at a Cargill. There’s no truck stops anywhere within driving distance...within reasonable driving distance I should say... Texas is one of those places that you go into it and you just feel sticky coming out of it because it’s so humid and it’s warm. You feel gross... I hadn’t had the opportunity to bathe the night before. I had to watch my hours and by the time I got stopped I was too tired and so I just went back and crashed thinking I’ll get one in the morning. And when the morning came I [had] to hurry up and get the trailer there. So I went rushing over there to get the trailer there and when I got there, there was no shower. No truck stops. And I was feeling gross because I’d been outside in the dust and sweaty and humid...”

Maya's quote demonstrates how difficult it can be to get something as (seemingly) simple as a bath as a truck driver. In a very real sense she has lost control over her body. Sometimes a driver does not have time or is just too tired to get a shower. In this case, Maya was so desperate for a shower that she eventually bathed and washed her hair in a tiny bathroom sink at the customer's loading dock. Also, it is clear that drivers, like Maya, are part of the problem because their bodies also bring filth into the spaces they encounter such as the loading dock.

Many drivers place a lot of emphasis on getting clean even though getting clean is easier said than done. The process of getting a shower in a truck stop is a strange experience. Most people (in the developed world at least) are accustomed to having access to a centrally located bathroom where you can bathe when you please. In a truck stop you put your name on a list and wait for them to call your name or number and it can require a significant time investment. One driver noted that it can sometimes take up to two hours before a shower is even available. It is a tossup as to whether or not there will be clean facilities or not. You are also sharing this room with the hundreds of other bodies that have been there before so a lot of drivers wear shower shoes.<sup>13</sup> Also, taking a shower everyday can be very expensive as showers typically costs ten dollars each although several truck stop chains have loyalty points which gives free showers depending on how

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<sup>13</sup> In August 2011, I took a shower at a facility near Aurora Illinois. An attendant waited for customers and handed them warm towels as they went into the individual shower room (although one respondent expressed disbelief about this so at least on this point my experience was not the norm) While drivers often bring their own soap and shampoo, in this case those items were made available. I was surprised to see how roomy the showers were, with a changing area that was separate from the shower stall. I did wear shower shoes because I wanted to limit contact with the numerous other bodies that showered in this same place. Finally, it was very convenient to finish my shower, get dressed, and then walk out into the adjoining McDonalds for breakfast.

much fuel they buy.<sup>14</sup> Without these points, bathing can cost up to three hundred dollars a month! On the other hand, while these fuel points can be very helpful, they can present a spatial constraint because you have to stop for fuel at places where you have a membership card. Furthermore, companies often place a limit on which truck stops where a driver can purchase fuel so, that narrows down potential places to shower even more. The experience of truck drivers in their workplace is vastly different from other occupations. Their basic bodily functions are constrained by the mobility of their workplace and drivers lose control over their bodies. The dirtiness of this job is exacerbated by their limited ability to rid themselves of filth.

### **Clean, Professional Bodies**

What is interesting about truck drivers is that people engaged in stigmatized work usually use that stigma as a way to bond with other workers in their workplace (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Bolton, 2005; Dyer et al., 2008). It helps workers create a supportive network that allows them to cope with the fact that their job is devalued. These tactics create an outsider/insider dynamic where workers claim that nobody, other than people who work in their field, can understand what they go through on a daily basis which can also translate into workers seeing each other as a family (Bolton, 2005). However, when it comes to image, truck drivers do the opposite of bonding; they turn on each other. They work to differentiate themselves from unsavory drivers. However, truck drivers also do something that is common among dirty workers, they say drivers should be more

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<sup>14</sup> Many of the larger truck stop chains, such as TA, Pilot, and Petro, have point system cards where you get points for how much fuel you purchase. These points can then be used to pay for showers. So with 50 gallons of fuel, you can get typically get one shower and with 100 you can get two free showers. Those points expire, usually after a week.

professional and in many cases, being a professional includes appropriate bodily presentation (Bolton, 2005; Dyer et al., 2008; Solari, 2006).

Customers are a driver's most important audience for bodily presentation. Many of the drivers I spoke with took extra care to be presentable to their customers. These drivers complain about other drivers who are not clean and presentable. These drivers say that dirty, unkempt drivers are just playing into stereotypes of truck drivers and stigmatizing other drivers. In order to set themselves apart from these dirty bodies, drivers talk about looking and behaving like a professional. Drivers also engage in body monitoring of dirty drivers who they think give drivers a bad image.

Connor said that his relationships with customers are often affected by drivers before him who were not dressed appropriately, showed up late, were disorganized, and treated the customers disrespectfully. Connor complained about drivers who arrived at the customer's facility wearing shoes, such as flip flops, that were unsafe in an industrial setting. He further argued that sloppy looking drivers have 'no sense of professionalism' and do not 'treat it like a business'.

Maya confirmed that customers *do* judge drivers on how they look. Before she started driving a truck, Maya worked in a warehouse where she interacted with truck drivers delivering products to her company. She readily admitted that she and her coworkers had negative attitudes about truck drivers based on the drivers they came in contact with who were unkempt and disorganized. Maya blames these kinds of drivers for the negative attitudes she encounters as a driver delivering to these warehouses.

“Occasionally I’ll get the grouch that had to deal with the stinky guy with bad teeth and bad breath before me who was nothing but a jerk to him..”

Connor’s comments about professionalism introduce another finding on the ways in which drivers cope with stress about image. These drivers call for acting and dressing like a professional. This allows drivers to distance their good bodies from the bad bodies of these other drivers. According to Connor, contrary to the public’s perceptions, most drivers behave like professionals out on the road and the bad truck drivers are the proverbial bad apples in the bunch.

Maya sees herself as the “face” of her company and that professionals behave “like someone who somebody would want to deal with.” That includes being clean, courteous, presenting organized paperwork to the customer, and treating the customers’ property with respect. Another respondent, Edgar, is an independent owner-operator but is also the head of a small trucking business. Echoing Maya’s contention, Edgar says that his drivers are indeed the face of his business. According to him, bodies indicate professionalism and he refuses to hire drivers who do not look professional because they reflect poorly on his business. Indeed, dirty bodies may even be detrimental to his customer base.

“It’s easiest to tell what a man is by how he looks. If he looks professional, ninety percent of the time he is... Well dressed. Clean shaven. Don’t smell like a billygoat. That’s the pro... Wearing sweat pants, sandals, ain’t shaved in 6 months- that’s a turn off to me. I ain’t going to hire him. You’re not going to represent my company looking like that. It’s too hard to get customers out here... I’m not going to let somebody too shy to take a bath to cost me business.”

Sylvia, Maya, Connor, and Edgar all show that drivers engage in body monitoring to determine professionalism. Two brief stories from Bill and Michelle serve as added

examples of body monitoring. In one case, respondent Bill was in a truck stop and he saw another driver who was wearing a worn out flannel shirt that was ripped and then repaired with a pieces of duct tape. Bill followed this driver around until he was able to get a picture of the duct taped shirt. He texted that picture to his coworkers with the caption “This is why I hate being a truck driver.” In the other case, Michelle was so offended by the body odor of another driver that she informed him that he smelled bad and then proceeded to buy him a shower.

Some drivers went to the extreme, however. These drivers judged their success at achieving a professional image if people did not know they were a truck driver. Ralph wants people to think he is travelling rather than driving a truck. He accomplished this by wearing button down dress shirts, khakis, nice shoes, and cologne. One coworker said that Ralph looked like he was going to the office everyday rather than driving a truck. Tonya was proud of the fact that some customers have mistaken her for an office worker rather than a truck driver. So, for these drivers, if you do not look like a truck driver then you have achieved the bodily presentation of a good truck driver.

The concerns about professionalism and body image extend beyond how drivers looked to customers and other drivers. The negative image affects those living at home. Drivers expressed a feeling of shame when their family members had to tell people that their loved one was a truck driver. The dirty, smelly, poorly dressed trucking bodies could be a source of embarrassment for their family members who have to tell people that their family member is a truck driver. Judith said that she once saw a bumper sticker that read “Don’t tell my mother I’m a truck driver. She thinks I’m a piano player in a



whorehouse.” She quipped that her mother would prefer she was a piano player in a whorehouse.

Returning to Bill’s photo of the truck driver with the duct taped shirt, he felt that when his wife told people that her husband was a truck driver they would imagine that man instead of his own neat appearance. Tonya’s family was not happy with her choice to be a truck driver. They thought it was a job for a white person. Her family also felt that she would be more suited to be working in the white (and pink) collar spaces of the school, the office, or the hospital. While she enjoys her job and says it is an ‘honest’ living she blames the trucking image of the “drugs, prostitution, fast trucks, and sloppy living” for her family’s negative attitude towards her job.

Another source of information about the trucking image came out of a discourse analysis of trucking publications *Overdrive* and *Landline* that published articles about the image of U.S. truck drivers and I found that these articles echo the same concerns and solutions that my respondents voiced in the interviews. These articles talked about the negative image of drivers frequently (Longton & Lockridge, 1997; Skipper, 1994a) and the vast majority of these articles focused on the bodies of truck drivers. Several articles argued that the bad image for truck drivers is often the fault of the truck driver because there are many drivers who wear beards, long hair, use profanity on the CB, drive dangerously (Duncan, 2001; Skipper, 1993, 1994b, 1995, 1996) and even sport naked lady mud flaps on their rig (Skipper, 1993). Andy Duncan (2001) linked a disheveled appearance with a body that is out of control and thus dangerous. Like drivers I talked to, Sean Kilcarr

made the claim that trucking was an “admirable career” when he started driving but it is now the “bottom of the barrel” (Kilcarr, 2001) and is getting worse (Duncan, 2001).

However, one article (Skipper, 1996) also makes the point that trucking is now more of a “mental” job than a physical job. This emphasis on mental skill was also brought up in interviews where drivers would counter the image of the unskilled, uneducated truck driving body by talking about drivers they have met who were former physicians, nurses, and professors. This was proof that not all drivers fit the image of the ‘dumb’ trucker; some truckers are smart. The use of the term professional by my respondents, as well as the drivers in these articles, is another way for drivers to elevate their job’s status.

### **Bodies on the Highway: General Public**

Dirty workers also position themselves by saying that people outside of their occupation could not understand what they go through in order to get the job done (Bolton, 2005).

This is the way in which many truck drivers talk about their public image and the reality of their workplace. Truckers are often viewed as dangerous drivers, highly sexualized, dirty, and outlaws. Such stereotypes are a source of frustration for many truckers because they are not an accurate depiction of their lives or character. Drivers blame these hurtful images on ignorance of the general public that is unaware of what they go through to do their job and they blame three main culprits for perpetuating these stereotypes: media, other truck drivers, and passenger car drivers (or “four wheelers” in CB lingo).

The most frequently cited answer as to why these stereotypes about drivers are so prevalent, is the media. Some examples of these media based images include the

following. In the movie *Thelma and Louise*, a truck driver hauling a tanker sexually harassed the women throughout their journey. When they finally caught up to him, they confront him and blow up his truck in a moment of revenge. Before they shot out his tires and tanker, the audience sees the trucker get out of his truck and approach the women. The driver is lecherous, dusty, has a pot belly, is hauling hazardous materials, and sounded ignorant because he was clueless as to why the women were upset. Another example comes from a small time singer-songwriter, Mark Weigle, who wrote a song about sex with a truck driver that included the line "Hey Mr Trucker man you don't like to shower do you? I'll bury my face in that greasy pit." So these images and words give a reference point for how some people in the public view truck drivers.

Essentially, drivers are portrayed as dangerous marauders on the nation's highways in a news media culture with an "if-it-bleeds- it-leads" mentality. Drivers argue that the truck driver is usually blamed even if there is clear evidence that a passenger car was at fault. This is in spite of the fact that the American Trucking Association ("Relative Contribution/Fault in Car-Truck Crashes," 2013) and the FMCSA (*Large Truck Crash Overview 2010 2012*) say that most fatal accidents are the fault of passenger car driver. The media is also able to bring in ratings by exposes on fatigued driving, drug and alcohol abuse, and even prostitution. These drivers also blame other media sources such as films, especially *Convoy*, *Maximum Overdrive*, and *Smokey and the Bandit*. Also, this dangerous trucker image is pervasive in television ads for personal injury attorneys.

Second, drivers, like Connor, laid blame on other drivers who ignored laws regarding speeding, log books, and weight. Chris finds fault with drivers who use profanity and talk about inappropriate topics on the CB and truck stops. Terrance finds this behavior

problematic because there could be families out there on the road with CBs and they might hear these conversations. Some drivers also highlighted the presence of drugs in the industry as a mark against drivers. While many drivers argued that drugs were a thing of the past there were some who confirmed that drugs were easily accessible, especially at truck stops.

Third, drivers blame negative images of their work on a public that does not understand truck drivers. Drivers often conflate ‘public’ with ‘four wheelers’ or passenger cars. In some cases, there is an adversarial relationship between big trucks and four wheelers. As a former driver explains, the public sees the physical presence of trucks and truck drivers behind the wheel as big, scary, and monstrous. Chris used the term ‘nuisance’ to describe the attitude that four wheelers had about trucks and truck drivers

“They don’t care. All they know is that big truck and they can't see around them or had to get in their lane and get in their way and slow them down. It’s a nuisance and nobody wants a nuisance”.

Ironically, Chris is saying that drivers often feel they are the ones who are being pushed around by an uncaring public. In these accounts, trucks are in the way of passenger cars, not the other way around. Joe echoed Earline’s comments about a public fearful of big scary trucks that might run over four wheelers. However, Joe goes on to say that in his experience passenger cars will cut off an eighty thousand pound truck and then slam on the brakes because “you’re in their way.” Sam also talked about passenger cars that would pass on the right side of the highway by driving through the grass. Limousines would cut him off or pass with no concerns for the blind spots of an eighteen wheeler. So,

according to drivers, the public often does not understand the basic physics involved in bringing an eighty thousand pound vehicle to a halt.

The important conclusion for these accounts is the sentiment that the public and four wheelers just do not understand what it means to be a truck driver and drive an eighteen wheeled vehicle. According to drivers, the public cannot fathom a life without a sedentary job and lifestyle. Tyler had a difficult time explaining to the post office that he had no home address other than his trucking company because he, literally, lived in his truck. Apparently, in an attempt to figure out where Tyler lived, the post office asked where he slept. Tyler recalled that people looked at him like he was ‘disgusting’ when he answered that he slept in his truck.

One part of the problem, according to drivers, is that people do not understand truck drivers because many people just do not know any truck drivers. Even when you meet trucks on the highway, the most a person can see of that person is their head and arms. A truck stop chaplain said people cannot put themselves in the driver’s shoes. They have no idea what an individual driver might be going through that day. As Earline succinctly put it,

“a truck driver is a person they don’t know...they don’t relate to the person driving the truck[as] a human being”

In order to deflect negative images about their labor, stigmatized workers use a variety of ways to ‘reinterpret’ (Solari, 311) their jobs. The workers emphasize that their job is crucial to the economy and they are providing an important service that nobody else can

do (Brody, 2006; Dyer et al., 2008). This allows workers to improve their self-esteem and mitigate negative perceptions about their job.

How do drivers deal with these negative perceptions about their occupation among the general population? First, as mentioned earlier, drivers resort to claims of professionalism. Second, they highlight their important presence in the consumerist economy. Finally, there are industry-wide efforts to repair the image of truck drivers in an effort to make it a more appealing occupational choice.

Dirty workers also ‘reinterpret’ their jobs by saying their job is a crucial service for the public (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Drivers push back on negative portrayals of their industry by emphasizing their importance to the economy generally and consumers in particular. Connor cited a study that concluded that if trucks stopped running, American cities would start to face food shortages within three days since trucks are the primary way in which they get food. Continuing with Earline’s comments earlier about people not understanding the industry, she also finds it difficult to explain to people that

“...everything thing you’ve got comes by truck...Everything you’ve got that comes by truck had to go by truck before as raw material...”

Emilio echoed Earline’s comments. He did not understand why people think trucking is a “low class job” because it takes a lot of skills. Plus drivers are “transporting goods for people” and they are “transporting merchandise for the industry in order to keep the

country going.” So drivers seek to create a new image of this industry where they are crucial to the economy and our comfort.

Chris highlighted these concerns when he exclaimed ,

“ Those shoes you’re wearing, the toilet paper you have to have, your canned goods, your produce that you want there fresh and overnight. How do you expect that to get there? Just put it on the train? Do you see any train tracks coming to your store?...A lot of people are so ignorant they don’t know how it works...”

### **Nuances of Perception**

What the literature on dirty work does not cover is whether or not the public really maintains these negative attitudes about dirty jobs. Obviously, truck drivers are convinced that the public looks down upon them. However, I found that while there are negative attitudes about truck drivers I also found some nuance in those perceptions. In some cases, the public does look down on drivers and in other cases, they do not.

Drivers are correct in thinking that the public looks down on them especially when it comes to interactions on the highway. Scott Weidner from Transport for Christ (TFC) relayed a story where he made a presentation to his church in an effort to get the church to financially support the TFC ministry. A member of his church felt like there are too many trucks out on the road.

“We’ve got one crusty old bird...Bob’s about 85 years old...former pastor...He came up to me after the first time that I spoke at our church. He said “I’m going to tell you something. Every time I see you...you said every time you see a driver you pray for them. Every time I see one of those guys I think ‘I want to get him off the road. We don’t need any more trucks on the road...” “

In another instance, the ATA commissioned a Gallup Organization poll in 1997. Gallup polled 1,000 adults in the US about their perceptions of truck drivers (Christenson, Aames, Hughes, & Kinney, 1997).. The poll showed that there were not a lot of negative attitudes about truckers. Truck drivers were viewed as friendly, helpful, and professional although most of the respondents also said that drivers were not law abiding.

I also found other evidence of negative attitudes about truck drivers in an online article from the Minneapolis Minnesota *Star Tribune* about how trucking is a difficult way to make a living (D. Hanson, 2011). There were hundreds of reactions in the comment section. Many of those comments were highly critical of drivers saying that they were dangerous and on drugs. Many of them complained about trucks hogging the left lane, blamed them for accidents, and accused them of tailgating. There were also several comments that said truckers need to get off the road and let trains do all of the shipping because it is supposedly safer and more environmentally safe.

What accounts for this difference? I would argue that in the polling situation, there was actual human contact so respondents might not feel free to express their real opinions. Plus possible answers in this type of method are limited. In contrast, the comments section was a free for all that allowed respondents to post their negative feelings anonymously and without restriction. Furthermore, the Gallup poll actually did show that the general public does not think that truck drivers are law abiding.

However, the drivers I spoke with said that one group of people that does have positive feelings about truck drivers: people who are connected to trucking through friends or family. When I asked Cynthia what she thought that people outside of the industry



thought about trucking, she made the point to explain that it all depends on whether a person knows a driver or not. Those individuals who know a driver are much more sympathetic with what drivers do during the course of a day.

Contrary to the drivers' perception that the public looks down on them Cynthia says that people who know drivers have respect for drivers. She told a story about a short chat over breakfast with a couple of older men in a truck stop. One of the gentlemen made a point to shake her hand and say "I sure thank you for what you're doing" before leaving. She continues by saying that

"I've never gotten that from anybody who doesn't know truck drivers. The ones who don't know the truck drivers are the ones who have the wrong image."

Thus, as Cynthia explains, not everybody looks down on drivers. In fact people who know drivers can empathize with their daily work. Those in the know are able to decipher the bodies of truck drivers as bodies that endure challenging working conditions and receive little thanks. Those with loved ones in the industry are all too aware of what drivers deal with. Although, as Connor points out, there is a general disregard for blue collar workers in a service-based white and pink collar economic system. I also think that the discourse behind Cynthia's account is not unlike the discourse about members of the armed forces where civilians have little idea of the "sacrifice" that those individuals make to "keep us safe".

## **Drivers Talk Back**

One aspect that the dirty work literature does not cover is how stigmatized industries push back against negative portrayals in the media. While I spoke with my respondents at length about the stereotypes of the truck driver, most of the solutions to this problem focused on being neat, organized, and safe drivers. The trade magazines for trucking helped me piece together other solutions that are put forth as ways to “repair” the image of trucking. Several articles in *Overdrive* spoke of drivers returning to their status of ‘Knights on the Highway’ (Hitchcock, 1995; Longton & Lockridge, 1997) where drivers were respected and trusted as safe, capable, professionals who would stop and help you if your car broke down. In a column of *Overdrive* magazine called “Images and Issues” Carolyn Magner analyzed press and media images of trucking, many of which were sent in to Magner by drivers, who received an *Overdrive* hat if their submission was used. Magner also encouraged drivers to contact various offenders and voice their concern.

Magner and her readers found the following: a Hasbro Tonka truck that had a mean sounding trucker voice saying “Get outta my way!” (Magner, 1996d); a Boston radio station where morning deejays would contact drivers via CB to taunt drivers to get them angry or pretend to be a prostitute to get them to pull over (Magner, 1998c); a TV news expose entitled “Weapons on Wheels” (Magner, 1997b); columnists who claimed truck drivers were dangerous and on drugs (Magner, 1997a, 1998a, 1998b, 1998d); and a Halloween card that featured a driver with his truck in the background, holding a pumpkin in front of his large belly that read “Trucker Treat” (Magner, 1998e). In 1996, Magner brought Ann Landers and her twin sister Dear Abby into the mix. First, Ann

Landers apologized after answering a letter regarding the visibility of armpit hair in restaurants with the quip “have you been hanging out in truck stops?” (Magner, 1996c). Six months later, Magner was praising Dear Abby, for including a thank you letter to a truck driver who found a woman’s purse and turned it into the highway patrol in California (Magner, 1996b).

Some of the drivers’ efforts were more successful than others. A Rack Room shoes commercial featured a lecherous, unkempt truck driver approaching a woman filling up her tank who tries to pick her up by saying “You must be tired. You’ve been running through my dreams.” Rack Room dismissed drivers’ concerns by refusing to retract the ad because it was intended to be ‘funny’. But some campaigns were successful. Shell ditched a commercial that showed a truck almost hitting a car that was broke down on the side of the road after numerous complaints by truck drivers. Shell even offered an apology to drivers (Magner, 1999). There were also positive press and media images for drivers such as a *For Better or Worse* cartoon where a driver saved a woman’s life after she had an accident on the highway.

There are also other suggested solutions to the image problem that involve changing the image to a professional family man. Some examples include:

“...Many responsible people are trying hard to restore [a good image to trucking]... We do what we can to convince the public that truckers are hardworking people trying to earn a living, not made-for-TV-stereotypes.” (Skipper, 1994b)

“...family oriented men and women. As a result the image of the renegade trucker is being replaced with a higher class of individuals who consider themselves professional drivers in a competitive industry”(Magner, 1996a)

So these efforts at repairing this image is a full time job and sounds like a perpetual problem that is difficult to eradicate. Sometimes those efforts rely on heteronormative claims that family men have a safer image, presumably because they are domesticated and middle class, and that women are less likely to be renegades, which is curious since being a woman in this industry is inherently rebellious.

The industry has also created programs that seek to improve the image of the truck driver. One example involves the creation of a public relations department at the Interstate Truckload Carriers Conference. The stated goal is to “put a face on the person behind the wheel” and to “humanize” drivers through human interest stories about drivers who do good deeds (Mason, 1997). There is also the Goodyear Highway Hero where the public, companies, and law enforcement can nominate drivers who have done good deeds in order to “elevate the image” of truck drivers”. Efforts also include various forms of trucker charity like participation in the Make a Wish foundation (Longton & Lockridge, 1997) and Trucker Buddy where drivers ‘adopt’ elementary school classes and send them weekly postcards, letters and other materials to help children learn geography, math skills, and writing skills.

## **Conclusion**

I began this chapter with Cynthia's comments about the negative images that surround trucking bodies. This chapter focused on how the image of truck drivers has changed according to truck drivers. I spotlight negative attitudes about truck drivers and argue that part of this negative imagery is based on the fact that they are doing a "dirty" job where they come into contact with dirt and spaces imagined to be immoral. This chapter shows that how workers see themselves and their fellow workers is crucial to their self esteem as workers and the experience of the workplace.

On a personal note, I have long been aware of the fact that people looked down on my father's occupation, but I was never able to understand where these perceptions came from. I used the dirty work literature as a way to understand the kinds of discursive elements that surrounded the image of trucking. I believe that it is important for drivers to examine stereotypes of their occupation and to work against them. Truck drivers *are* important to our economy and in many ways their exploitation is hidden by these negative stereotypes. If these drivers are dangerous, dirty, and oversexed, then consumers do not have to feel any guilt over the fact that their wants and needs are filled by people who are overworked, underpaid, and labor in a deadly work environment where they do not even have the same protections against injuries on the job.

Drivers feel that they are unfairly stigmatized and stereotyped by the general public, and the media. Drivers find these clichés to be hurtful. Many drivers have internalized these negative portrayals and they are embarrassed to be a truck driver. They are also embarrassed for their family to admit that their loved one is a driver. As a result, drivers

must find a way to push back against these tropes. Truck drivers frequently charge that other drivers are responsible for bad images of trucking. So they try to repair that image by calling upon professionalism in behavior and dress. Unfortunately, policing each other's bodies and casting aspersions against drivers harms solidarity in this workplace and makes it easier for the industry to exploit these workers.

The drivers that I spoke with also find fault with how the media handles stories about truck drivers and claim they sensationalize issues dealing with the trucking industry. Drivers generally think the public takes them for granted and so they emphasize their importance to the economy and consumerism.

As I mentioned in the chapter, there are efforts to improve the image of truck drivers. Those include various programs and charity work. The idea is to show that truck drivers are just hard working people that do not resemble these caricatures of dangerous, uneducated, bullies on the nation's highways. However, I would argue that Carolyn Magner's *Images and Issues* had a lot of potential for helping drivers combat negative representations. It is a shame that it is no longer available. It allowed drivers to monitor how varying forms of media sought to perpetuate negative depictions of the industry. It encouraged drivers to get in contact with companies and ad agencies and challenge them on their negative portrayals of their industry. So instead of internalizing these harmful media representations and pointing the blame at other drivers, it gave drivers something concrete they could do to correct the portrayal of their livelihood.

The next chapter is also about bodies but about unhealthy bodies. So far, we have established that there are many changes in the trucking industry. Probably one of the most obvious (and disturbing) changes in the industry is that truck drivers' bodies are being disposed of by trucking agencies and motor carriers through regulation and science.

## Chapter 5: Trucker Health

“...The health costs of that lifestyle are huge. And they’re getting worse. And now the Feds are coming down and they’re saying ‘Oh my gosh, we don’t want you behind the wheel of a truck if you have any of these issues’... they’re not giving anybody any tools to... mitigate or reverse the sacrifices and the deterioration in their health that have become necessary in order to do the job for the last 20 years. So it’s like they say ‘Too bad so sad. We’re just going to find somebody else to replace you...’”

-Buck

Buck’s quote signals an important reality about driving a truck: it wears a body out and driver bodies are expendable and replaceable. There are many obstacles in trucking that make it difficult to protect a person’s bodily integrity, like difficult sleep schedules, lack of places to rest, restrictions on places to bathe, and even bad food. Then there is the difficulty driving on bumpy, curvy roads, the constant vibration of the body, the long periods of being sedentary, driving in heavy traffic, and driving in rigs that may be out of alignment. As Buck’s quote demonstrates, truck drivers face a host of maladies that are the direct result of the wear and tear of this job on their bodies.

In this chapter I argue that one of the most obvious changes in the modern trucking industry is the destruction of trucking bodies. Worn out bodies are the consequences of an industry that overworks their employees to the tune of 70 hours per week (although it should be noted that previous Hours of Service laws allowed drivers to drive up to 82 hours a week). Drivers face a plethora of health conditions that are related to the difficult work environments surrounding a consumer based economy. This is such a massive problem that there are several academic papers that look at the issue as well as an entire



conference on trucker health. There are a lot of articles from trucking industry magazines that talk about getting and staying healthy which blame drivers for the state of their health. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), however, acknowledges that these ailments stem from an unhealthy work environment. Despite this known cause and effect scenario, stakeholders, like the FMCSA and motor carriers, use bad health as an excuse to dispose of worn out bodies under the guise of protecting the public.

This chapter focuses on the biopolitical tactics of the FMCSA. In order to understand the case of trucking and biopolitical surveillance tactics discussed in this chapter, it is necessary to explain the strategic role of the FMCSA in trucking. The FMCSA has the task of decreasing crashes involving large trucks on the highway.<sup>15</sup> The FMCSA seeks to improve the safety of heavy trucks by monitoring motor carriers with poor safety records, using technologies that help the process of monitoring trucking companies and drivers, and conducting research. The FMCSA maintains a plethora of regulations that involve oversight of drivers, companies, vehicles, and hazardous materials. These regulations are enforced by certified inspectors and officers on the local, state, and federal level although most are enforced by state agencies. The FMCSA uses research in science and medicine to determine its rules and regulations. The most recent examples of these regulations are a ban on handheld phones, texting, and detecting driver fatigue.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> There have been several different names for agencies that oversee the trucking industry but the latest iteration started in January 2000 as a result of the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999.

<sup>16</sup> The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is another Department of Transportation (DOT) agency that works to maintain safety and infrastructure on the nation's highways. Drivers most frequently come in contact with FHWA through weight and dimension standards. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) oversees issues of safety for all motor vehicles including large trucks.

The FMCSA is the most common way, besides law enforcement, where drivers encounter biopolitical power in their workplace. Truck drivers face being stopped on the highway or at weigh stations to undergo official inspections that are based on the FMCSA rules and regulations.<sup>17</sup> The FMCSA views every inspection as an “intervention” and an opportunity to avoid injuries, crashes, and lives saved. The agency uses a calculation called the Intervention Model which determines the number of injuries and fatalities that are avoided through inspections at the roadside and at inspection stations (Gillham, Horton, & Schwenk, 2013)

Many industries are concerned about the health of their workers but trucking is unique because drivers have less protection against workplace injuries and discrimination based on disabilities than other working populations. In some cases, agencies will be in conflict with other agencies over authority. For example, while the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) normally handles workplace injuries and safety, in trucking its authority is actually superseded by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) (Flatow, 2000). The USDOT handles all worker accidents on interstates as well as fatalities. OSHA only applies at the warehouses and plants of customers. Similarly, the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) normally works to combat discrimination in the workplace based on physical disabilities. However, the FMCSA routinely bars drivers because of conditions like epilepsy or for missing limbs (Flatow, 2000).

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<sup>17</sup> These inspections include a check of a driver’s credentials and a check for mechanical issues. These inspections can last anywhere from fifteen minutes to over an hour. If a truck does not meet the Federal standards then they are put “out of service” until the issues are corrected. Out of service orders can involve the driver, the truck, or both. In fiscal year 2012, there were almost 3.6 million inspections conducted by state and federal officials. All but 130,000 were conducted at the state level. These inspections resulted in five percent driver out of service orders and twenty percent vehicle out of service orders.

I begin by documenting the various health risks that drivers endure. This will include an overview of studies about trucker health as well as the health issues that my respondents faced. Then I explore the issue of trucker health using Michel Foucault's concept of biopower where various institutions work to control the life and death of its citizens (Foucault, 2003). I focus specifically on the FMCSA and its role in regulating and controlling fatigue. It is through the FMCSA's scientific discourse about fatigue and safety that stakeholders, such as state law enforcement and motor carriers, justify invasive monitoring tactics to rid the industry and the highway of tired bodies. The FMCSA's research and regulations work to construct and exclude dangerous trucking bodies. These dangerous trucking bodies may lead to the death and injury of the general public in the form of crashes.

## **Bodies**

The literature on bodies encourages geographers to consider the body as a lived in space. The body is the way in which people feel and experience life. Historically, scholars have maintained a mind-body dichotomy where the mind is superior to the body because the mind "transcends" the fleshy experience (Longhurst, 1995; Sundberg, 2005). However, even with the postmodern idea of performativity, the body is not recognized as a lived, experienced space. Bodies are something you do something to (Colls, 2007) Yet we can "read" bodies to determine social constructions of identity (Johnston, 1996; Tolia-Kelly, 2010) to determine if those people are meeting social norms. Aging bodies, for example, are read to be vulnerable and close to death even if a person does not feel like they are old (Mowl et al., 2000). We read bodies to determine racial identification (Tolia-Kelly,

2010), perceived disability (Hall, 2000), or acquiescence to gender norms (Holliday & Hassard, 2001; Hyams, 2003; Johnston, 1996).

The trucking industry is a crucial link to an economy that is based on satisfying consumers and truck drivers sacrifice their bodies for this economy (Taussig, 1997). As a result, truck drivers face a growing number of threats to their health and safety. In the end, trucking creates a body that is painful and worn out.

### **Health and Bodies**

Like literature of bodies and geography, health geography seeks to reconceptualize the body as a living, dynamic place rather than a vector of disease (T. Brown & Duncan, 2002; Parr, 1998, 2002). Health geography is concerned about how bodies experience disease and how that is shaped by place. Of particular interest is the relatively new phenomenon of viewing health and medical care as an effort at managing risk (T. Brown & Duncan, 2002). Patients must take the responsibility of managing risk in their lives through quitting smoking, dieting, and regular checkups. Managing risk also means increased surveillance of risky bodies (Greenhough, 2011). Similar attitudes are found in discourses about trucker health. If a person fails to properly manage their health risks, then it is his or her fault if they get sick (T. Brown & Duncan, 2002). Good citizens take care of themselves (Parr, 2002). The recent 'obesity epidemic' scare is an excellent example of how this kind of rhetoric works. Good citizens are thin and if they are not thin, then they must take steps to reduce their weight because it could increase the odds of developing diabetes or heart disease. Individuals who don't control their weight are

considered morally suspect and take up more than their fair share in health benefits. So obesity has been medicalized and imbued with moral proscription.

Truck drivers face a number of diseases like diabetes, cardio vascular disease, depression, obesity, and high blood pressure that is often linked to the lifestyle of driving. This chapter will examine those health issues briefly but it will also examine how Foucault's concept of biopower explains how and why the state has a vested interest in managing the health of its citizens. In terms of trucking, the health of truck drivers is directly linked to the health of the motoring public.

### **Trucking and Health**

Don Mitchell's work on migrant workers in California makes the argument that the ailments and deaths of workers are not "unfortunate accidents"(Mitchell, 2007). Injury and death are "part of the system" and the "precondition of our plenty" (Mitchell, 574). Butz and Leslie's (1998) work on the injuries of General Motors (GM) workers within lean production makes a similar argument. In order to save time and money GM has based its production line on flexible bodies that move in a carefully controlled spatial parameter (Butz & Leslie, 2001; Leslie & Butz, 1998). As a result, repetitive motion injuries are much more common than in previous years of production. These injuries are normalized as part of the job in a just in time (JIT) manufacturing logic and the company takes no responsibility for these injuries. Disability and chronic pain are built into the consumer products of General Motors.

Trucking, which the Labor Department says is the eighth most deadly industry in 2011 and 2012 (Kurtzleben, 2012; *National Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries in 2012 (Preliminary Results)*, 2013), is also linked to an economy that seeks to work bodies harder and longer. As such, there is a growing amount of research about the physical and mental health of truck drivers and that research confirms the accounts of my respondents by showing that this industry takes a severe toll on the drivers' bodies.

There is a high percentage of workers compensation claims among truck drivers (Olson, Anger, Elliot, Wipfli, & Gray, 2009). Drivers have high instances of diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, depression, sleep problems (Martin, 2009; McElligott, 2011), muscular-skeletal problems (Olson et al., 2009) and various cancers such as cancer of the lung (Laden, Hart, Smith, Davis, & Garshick, 2007; A. J. Solomon, Doucette, Garland, & McGinn, 2004; Steenland, Silverman, & Hornung, 1990). One study makes the claim that depression and drug abuse are common (Shattell, Apostopoulos, Sonmez, & Griffin, 2010)<sup>18</sup>. Drivers also have a lower life expectancy than the general population with owner operators having an average life expectancy of fifty six years of age (Apostolopoulos, Sonmez, Shattell, & Belzer, 2010 ). These health issues are attributed to the difficult working conditions of the trucking workplace.

Drivers are very sedentary because of the nature of their job so they often do not get adequate exercise nor do they find healthy food options at truck stops and fast food outlets (Olson et al., 2009). One study found that over fifty percent of drivers are

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<sup>18</sup> However, this study used a sample population that was specifically recruited because of their admitted substance abuse. Since depression can often be associated with substance abuse it is questionable whether this conclusion can be generalized to all truck drivers.

clinically obese (Martin, 2009). Almost half of drivers are smokers as well (Layne, Rogers, & Randolph, 2009). So researchers conclude these are the reasons why so many drivers are overweight or obese. In turn, these issues are linked to a high rate of cardiovascular disease (Apostolopoulos et al., 2010 ; A. J. Solomon et al., 2004). When the industry addresses heart disease, diabetes, and obesity in trade journals like *Overdrive* or *Landline*, it usually gives lip service to the fact that these diseases are epidemic in this workplace but they still blame the individual for the state of their health.

This workplace also exposes drivers to other kinds of health issues like injuries and toxins. Even accounting for the high smoking rates, researchers say that drivers have higher rates of lung cancer because of their frequent exposure to diesel and gas exhaust (Laden et al., 2007; Steenland et al., 1990). Drivers are exposed to various chemicals while loading and unloading. There are also other risks like injuries that can occur at plants and warehouses where drivers slip and fall on ice or oil slicks while loading and unloading. Some drivers have found that customers would not even let them into their buildings for shelter during dangerous weather such as tornadoes (Kell-Holland, 2011) Unfortunately, drivers and carriers are reluctant to complain to customers because they do not want to lose their business (Flatow, 2000).

This is a high stress job. Drivers have to meet the schedules of a just in time (JIT) manufacturing production where drivers must deal with a tight schedule while also meeting hours of service (HOS) constraints. At the same time drivers must navigate a highway system that includes accidents, construction, and high traffic. This process is even more difficult when drivers are 'driving for' passenger vehicles that are often ill-

informed about driving alongside semis. Several drivers that I spoke with felt that people do not understand that driving is stressful and much more difficult than just holding a steering wheel. The severity of this stress results in sleep problems and can also exacerbate, or even cause, many health problems like high blood pressure and diabetes (McElligott, 2011).

Drivers often face issues with getting health care which makes managing these health issues all the more difficult. Many drivers do not have access to insurance or have insurance that is limited in where they can seek medical care (A. J. Solomon et al., 2004). Most drivers do not have primary care physicians. Even if drivers have insurance or the means to pay they still have a schedule that makes it very difficult to make appointments because of their mobility. So most drivers end up waiting until they get home or go to emergency rooms for treatment (A. J. Solomon et al., 2004). However, there are a growing number of health services being offered at truck stop chains like Travel Centers of America that offer physicals, dental care, and chiropractor care.

Drivers are often forced to get out of the driver's seat because of these health conditions. Tammy spoke of the stress of driving where "your adrenalin is always flowing" and her doctor directly linked her ovarian cysts and hypothyroidism to this kind of stress. As a result, she got off the road. Both Michelle and Judith were dealing with severe chronic back problems. Judith spoke extensively about her experience of getting a previously wrecked truck where a damaged fifth wheel led to herniated discs and collapsed vertebrae. Her health issues forced her off the road and she was in an ongoing battle with workers compensation and her company. Earline was also forced off the road because of



osteoporosis. Both of these women had a long career in trucking. Judith had almost two million accident free miles and Earline was expecting to drive for another three years before her doctor made her get off the road after 35 years. This was a “severe blow” to Earline because she loved her job. In my last communication with her she had given up her CDL and was now, sadly, a regular Class C driver with a lot of good memories.

The heartbreaking part is the fact that once drivers lose these jobs they often have nowhere else to go because drivers’ bodies are so worn down by driving a truck. One of Judith’s friends tried to go back to work in a factory but quickly learned he did not have the energy and strength to work in that environment anymore.

The main conclusion that can be gleaned from health in the trucking industry is the fact that the workplace can be poisonous to workers. The ailments visited on the bodies of truck drivers comes directly from their work conditions which are sedentary, stressful, and toxic. The various studies regarding trucker health demonstrate that this is an unhealthy working environment that makes it difficult for drivers to maintain healthy bodies. Also, the accounts of my respondents who have had to leave the industry because of their deteriorating health shows that in many cases worker exploitation in trucking only stops when a worker’s body is worn out and disposable.

## **Biopower and Health**

Biopower typically involves science and medicine (Foucault, 2003) that is directed towards the population as a whole. At its most basic, biopower seeks to manage risk and uses science and medical knowledge to discipline and protect the public. One of the most common ways in which biopower is encountered is through regulations. Biopower's regulations include mortality, population, and birth (Foucault, 1990). Also, biopower is used to ensure that capitalists have workers that are controllable and productive and works to exclude those bodies that are not.

In the case of the trucking industry, the FMCSA is protecting the public against dangerous truckers as well as helping the industry to dispose of bodies that are a hindrance to profit making. Every inspection conducted by law enforcement and state-based departments of transportation includes an inspection of the driver's documents that includes a medical card certifying that a driver had the mandatory physical. The FMCSA has a series of bodily conditions that can make a driver ineligible to drive a truck. The FMCSA makes "unhealthy bodies...visible" (Greenhough, 2011) by regulating who can and cannot drive and with what diseases. Part 391.41 in the FMCSA regulations provides guidance for physicians to determine whether a driver is healthy enough to drive safely. The Office of Motor Carrier Research sends these recommendations to physicians on a regular basis. The FMCSA mandates that every driver must have a physical every two years and drivers with diabetes or high blood pressure must have medical checkups more frequently. A driver cannot drive a truck while missing a limb or eye unless he or she undergoes a Skill Performance Evaluation (SPE) which can determine whether that person can drive safely or not (49 CFR Part 391.41). Drivers cannot have epilepsy or

seizures unless the seizure event was due to a drug interaction or dehydration. There are also some obvious prohibitions against drug and alcohol abuse.

However, there are a number of conditions that disqualify a driver that many argue are endemic to the industry because of working conditions. Diabetes, for example, is a disqualifying factor if a driver is insulin dependent because low blood sugar could cause a person to lose consciousness. Type 2 diabetes can be linked to obesity which can be linked to the sedentary lifestyle and poor food options in trucking. Also, heart attacks, thrombosis, and blood pressure over 180/110 can all be disqualifying events.<sup>19</sup> Again these are diseases that can be attributed a sedentary, stressful lifestyle. And in the case of diabetes, the FMCSA basically admits that trucking is hard on the body. Consider the following statement regarding insulin-dependent diabetes which is affected by food options and insulin levels:

Factors related to long-haul commercial motor vehicle operation such as fatigue, lack of sleep, poor diet, emotional conditions, stress, and concomitant illness compound the diabetic problem” (391.41.(b)(3)).

So this agency is well aware that this is a difficult job that has clear consequences for the health of drivers. It is interesting that the solution is never about dealing with these issues to improve the health of the drivers *and* the safety of the public. The public must be protected at all costs. If that means a person loses their job so be it. Dangerous (trucking) bodies must be excluded from the highways and interstates.

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<sup>19</sup> However, once a person’s blood pressure is down to 140/90 they can return to work but must be rechecked every six months.

This section shows that agents of biopower simply do not care about the consequences of excluding bodies from the workplace even though they are being excluded because of the very conditions of that workplace. As Buck's quote highlights at the beginning of this chapter, trucking takes a physical and mental toll on the bodies of truck drivers and biopower allows the state to dispose of working bodies that are no longer productive. Again, the concern is about public as a whole not the needs of individual workers like long haul truck drivers. In the next section I discuss the ways in which the FMCSA monitors and regulates fatigue in the trucking industry as an example of how truck drivers' bodies experience biopower in their workplace.

### **Regulating Fatigue**

Fatigued driving is a major biopolitical concern for the FMCSA and preventing fatigue has become an omnipresent concern for agencies that deal with commercial vehicles. However, many drivers feel that the FMCSA is out of touch with the lifestyle of trucking. The following is the verbiage for part 392.3 in the FMCSA regulations that deals with fatigue.

Ill or fatigued operator. No driver shall operate a commercial motor vehicle, and a motor carrier shall not require or permit a driver to operate a commercial motor vehicle, while the drivers ability or alertness is so impaired, or so likely to become impaired, through fatigue, illness, or any other cause, as to make it unsafe for him/her to begin or continue to operate the commercial motor vehicle..

The FMCSA uses science regarding the threat posed by sleepy drivers as a rationalization for invading and controlling the bodies of workers. Three examples, Hours of Service (HOS) rules, the FIST program of the Minnesota State Police, and individual motor carrier's policies regarding sleep apnea, show how the biopower possessed by the FMCSA trickles down to state and local stakeholders. In each instance, fatigue is used to dispose of bodies on the road that might present a danger to the public. None of these efforts seek to improve the working environment for drivers to prevent the emergence of these threatening bodies.

### **Hours of Service (HOS) Rules**

HOS rules have been regulating the bodies of truck drivers for decades and it is one of the most prevalent ways in which drivers encounter the State. The essence of the HOS rules is about dealing with fatigue. The FMCSA justifies these policies by saying they are protecting the public from sleepy bodies. HOS rules are difficult to follow and they are invasive yet drivers must find ways to make their bodies fit the sleep standards addressed in the current FMCSA standards.

At its most basic, the HOS rules dictate when a driver is supposed to be on duty and off duty. Within the FMCSA rules is a provision that partitions the work space of trucks and the rest space of the truck. Drivers must have a sleeper berth that is clearly separated from the driving space. Also, drivers must use their beds for sleep. So essentially it is illegal to sleep in the driver or passenger seat. Drivers must log their hours in a log book which forces drivers to specifically account for all of their hours of duty, their hours off

duty, as well as their rest breaks and sleep<sup>20</sup>. While these are Federal regulations, the biopolitical disciplining mechanisms for HOS rules are most typically located at the state level through state controlled weigh stations or at the side of the road.

Many drivers feel that these rules do not reflect the realities of this workplace. Drivers, like Maya, contend that the HOS are created by people whose workplace is based on a nine to five job and that they do not consult long haul drivers about their scheduling needs. Indeed, an article jointly published by the FMCSA, USDOT, and the National Sleeping Foundation, provided some helpful hints on how drivers can deal with fatigue that are out of touch with how trucking works. Such hints included advising drivers to sleep in a quiet, dark place and not to eat before going to bed. These helpful tips assume drivers have more control over their sleep and eating schedule than they really do. Drivers may be off duty during the day. They may not be able to eat until late at night. Also, truck stops and rest areas can be a difficult place to sleep given the noise of the environment and how bright it is.

What is interesting about these accounts is that drivers talk about “knowing” their bodies better than the FMCSA and they basically lose control over their bodies under the threat of being put out of service, receiving a citation, and paying a steep fine. According to Maya, HOS regulations do not account for the circadian rhythms of the human body. She also argues that she faces a lot of pressure from her dispatcher about her scheduling drive time and sleep time. Times for loading and unloading can be variable. The loading or

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<sup>20</sup> Currently, driving over 3 hours past the 14 hour rule is an “egregious” violation and can result in significant fines for drivers and companies. Drivers face a civil penalty of \$2,750 per offense and companies face a civil penalty of \$11,000 per offence (Padilla, 2013).

delivery appointment may very well be at 3 o'clock in the morning. So when drivers go off duty after such an early appointment, they are essentially expected to sleep during the daytime which is difficult to do.

In order to stay on her day clock, Maya tries to regain control of her body and will sometimes drive longer so that when she stops she can get 8 hours of sleep at night. Maya maintains that she knows her body well enough to know when she should be driving and when she should not. This scenario presents a problem when it comes to logging their HOS. So drivers may fudge their logs in order to make sure they get enough sleep because, as Maya argued, it is safer for her to have a good night's rest while she is out on the highway and she believes that HOS do not allow for that. So drivers do not believe that the FMCSA fundamentally understands what it is like to drive a truck. However, the most current HOS rules claim to use science about circadian rhythms to determine these new rules.<sup>21</sup> Yet, drivers are not convinced that these new HOS rules will be any more realistic than previous efforts.

The issues surrounding HOS and fatigue in the trucking industry show that in many cases, biopolitical agents do not understand the workplace context of the bodies that they are regulating. As it stands, these regulations only benefit the health of the public and forces drivers to adjust and push their bodies beyond their natural limits.

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<sup>21</sup> These new regulations came into effect on July 1, 2013. The main changes to the law include limiting drivers to 70 working hours a week rather than 82, forcing drivers to take a break after 8 hours of continuous driving, and mandating that drivers have two consecutive nights of sleep from 1am to 5am during the week. Supposedly, these "data driven" rules will improve public safety and the health of truck drivers (Padilla, 2013). Companies represented by the American Trucking Association, as well as shippers, argue these regulations will decrease productivity and question the supposed science captured in the new HOS rules (M. Solomon, 2013).

## **FIST**

While the FMCSA HOS regulations give an excellent example of how biopower works in regards to trucking bodies, the case of a fatigue monitoring program by the Minnesota State Police (MNSP) gives an example of how biopower works in individual states on individual bodies and how that stems from regulations at the federal level. Most of the disciplinary mechanisms for the Federal power involving commercial vehicles are meted out at the state level. As previously mentioned, trucks and drivers must undergo varying levels of inspections at the state level in order to operate legally. The Fatigue Impairment Seatbelt Traffic (FIST) program is a series of studies conducted by the Minnesota State Police that focuses on fatigued driving among truck drivers. The tactics involved invasive questions and sought to limit the drivers' right to control their own bodies all in the name of public safety.

Inspired by the FMCSA's near constant rhetoric about fatigued driving, the state patrol in Minnesota created the FIST program, which was intended to protect the public on the highway from sleepy truck drivers (Soendkr, 2010b). Inspectors would pull drivers over at checkpoints throughout the state and use a checklist to survey drivers about their sleeping habits (Soendkr, 2010a). Many of these questions had a dubious connection with fatigued driving and included questions about bathroom habits, sex partners, if they had a TV, and whether or not the driver had pornography on the truck. State troopers were also instructed to evaluate the bodies of drivers to conclude whether or not they were fatigued. According to the training used for the special operation, the physical signs of fatigued



bodies included smelliness, bloodshot eyes and a “disheveled” appearance<sup>22</sup> (Soednkr, 2010 p. 20-21). State troopers were also instructed to tell drivers that they were merely conducting a study on fatigue and their answers would not count against them. Yet drivers were put out of service.

A member of the Owner Operator Independent Driver Association (OOIDA) was pulled over at one of these check points in 2008 (Soendkr, 2010b). He was asked prying questions about his personal habits and then put out of service for the night<sup>23</sup>. OOIDA filed a suit against the Minnesota State Patrol claiming that their member’s fourth amendment rights were violated. After a protracted legal battle, the Minnesota State Police were found to be guilty of deception and FIST was a violation of the driver’s Fourth Amendment rights (J. Jones & Soendkr, 2011). Minnesota is currently revamping the program to meet the restrictions mandated by the court.

The use of checklists, phrases like “sleep study,” and the training activities of the FIST program were meant to create an air of objectivity and science. These discursive elements were used to justify invasive, dehumanizing inspections to rid the highway of tired bodies. In terms of biopolitics and the workplace, the FIST program shows that biopower is not monolithic. It can be adapted at different levels of scale to meet the needs of other agents. In the end, the FIST program only needs to adapt itself to continue its mission of identifying and controlling fatigued bodies in Minnesota even though a federal court has

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<sup>22</sup> The training included a PowerPoint presentation that contained a picture of an unkempt Sadaam Hussein shortly after his capture by U.S. forces. The slide indicated that fatigued drivers would look like Hussein just after being pulled out of an underground bunker (Soendkr, 2010a).

<sup>23</sup> An out of service order is a serious event for drivers and companies as it strands drivers and trucks until law enforcement releases them. It leads to a loss of productivity and money. Out of service orders also show up on driver records and can make it difficult to hire on with other companies or even obtain truck insurance.

said the program is unconstitutional. Again, the intent of such programs is not to make it so that drivers can get more sleep. It is about invading bodily space under the guise of protecting the public.

## **Sleep Apnea**

Sleep apnea is also related to the regulation of bodily fatigue in the trucking industry and the scare over drivers with this condition comes out of FMCSA research about the condition. What sets this example apart from the other examples of biopower is that it often focuses on old drivers or drivers over 50 years of age. These sleepy, old bodies are a danger to the public and they must be treated or disposed of. Like previous examples of monitoring fatigue have shown, controlling sleep apnea includes invasive techniques aimed at driver bodies that seek to protect the public. However, in this case motor carriers are now using sleep apnea as a way to sift through worn out bodies of current employees as well as keep out the worn out bodies of potential applicants.

The following contains FMCSA regulations regarding sleep apnea in part 391.41(b)(5)

A person is physically qualified to drive a commercial motor vehicle if that person:

Has no established medical history or clinical diagnosis of a respiratory dysfunction likely to interfere with the ability to control and drive a commercial motor vehicle safely.

Since a driver must be alert at all times, any change in his or her mental state is in direct conflict with highway safety. Even the slightest impairment in respiratory function under emergency conditions (when greater oxygen supply is necessary for performance) may be detrimental to safe driving.

There are many conditions that interfere with oxygen exchange and may result in incapacitation, including emphysema, chronic asthma, carcinoma, tuberculosis, chronic bronchitis and sleep apnea. If the medical examiner detects a respiratory dysfunction, that in any way is likely to interfere with the driver's ability to safely control and drive a commercial motor vehicle, the driver must be referred to a specialist for further evaluation and therapy.

Fatigued driving has been linked to sleep apnea which is a disorder where people stop breathing while sleeping. The FMCSA claims that 28 percent of truck drivers suffer from sleep apnea (FMCSA, 2013). Sleep apnea is linked to fatigue because people do not get a good night's rest. Sleep apnea can cause people to gain weight which could lead to diabetes. Obesity is also a risk factor for the disease. Other risk factors include smoking and alcohol consumption as well as family history. Treatment for the condition usually includes a prescription for a Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machine which uses air to keep the breathing passage open while the person sleeps. According to FMCSA regulations, drivers can be forced off the road if their sleep apnea is moderate to severe (Morasch, 2011).<sup>24</sup> Drivers who have a CPAP are closely monitored. This monitoring includes a particularly invasive practice where doctors can monitor the use of the machine as information is collected with a memory card as well as wireless monitoring.

In some cases, the data from CPAPs can be cross referenced with a driver's log books to make sure they are also following hours of service rules. Because moderate to severe sleep apnea is a disqualifying condition under FMCSA rules, some drivers have lost their

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<sup>24</sup> The scare over sleep apnea can be quite profitable. Sleep studies for diagnosing sleep apnea are very expensive as they cost anywhere from two thousand to five thousand (Morasch, 2010).. Plus there are a segment of drivers that believe the focus on sleep apnea in the industry is a money making venture because the sleep studies, CPAP machines, and CPAP supplies are a lucrative business.<sup>24</sup>

jobs following a diagnosis and some companies have recruiting advertisements that drivers with sleep apnea need not apply. Drivers with apnea are now viewed as liabilities (Morasch, 2011). Some drivers might not tell their physician about their symptoms because they are afraid of losing their jobs or not being able to afford the tests. This defeats the purpose of examination and control.

When I spoke with Judith, she was very concerned about how sleep apnea was being used to dispose of aging bodies. She worked for one of the largest motor carriers and that company started to demand sleep studies for drivers, specifically those who were over fifty and obese. By her account, most of the people who go through the study come out with a CPAP machine and she felt that it was a money making venture for those in the sleep industry. However, she linked issues like sleep apnea tests with a general effort by her company to get rid of old drivers. Judith made the case that the company's concerns over sleep apnea and the health of older drivers were actually evidence of age discrimination. Her company began to blame older drivers for increasing insurance premiums. The executives also tried to claim that the high accident rates were the fault of older drivers. So saying a driver has sleep apnea helps weed out these older drivers who are typically making more money than younger drivers and new recruits. Ironically, Judith's company is targeting retirees for recruitment to stave off the supposed 'driver shortage' that is said to be looming in the future of the industry. Judith explained this contradiction by saying that her company wanted "new old bodies not old, old bodies" because the new old bodies were not worn out from years on the road. Clearly, her body along with the bodies of her friends, were old, old bodies.

So the concern over sleep apnea is fueled by the same scientific discourse of HOS rules and the FIST program. Fatigue is dangerous and is a threat to the public safety according to FMCSA research. However the sleep apnea case is much more invasive since it actually uses technology to monitor workers *while they sleep*, which according to HOS regulations, is when a driver is legally *off duty*. Another difference is that companies can use biopolitical discourse and tactics to get rid of undesirable workers. In this case, motor carriers can get rid of employees who may cause premium hikes for insurance and employees who are making higher salaries.

## **Conclusion**

Returning to Buck's earlier quote, the exploitative work environment in trucking destroys the bodies of drivers and there is ample evidence that these diseases are the result of this working lifestyle. Trucking wears bodies out. However, the efforts at addressing these problems usually surround protecting the safety of the general public on the highways. This is also the same public that benefits from a consumer economy that puts drivers' health at risk because of overwork. Consumers are the indirect reason why drivers are out there pushing their bodies far more than they should. The take away message about health in the workplace is that workplaces are often toxic for workers. Also, biopolitical agents in the workplace are often out of touch with the bodies that are being regulated.

I also examined the FMCSA, an agency charged with regulating trucks and truck drivers. While there is some effort on the part of the FMCSA to protect truck drivers, it mostly focuses its biopolitical power on protecting public health from dangerous trucking bodies

that have diabetes, missing limbs, and heart attacks. Drivers claim that the FMCSA is out of touch with the realities of bodies in this workplace. The most common example is that of HOS regulations which outline how many hours a driver must drive, work, and sleep. HOS rules do not consider things like traffic congestions, mechanical issues, and early/late deliveries.

The idea of a driver shortage is an oft repeated refrain from the trucking industry. Supposedly, once Baby Boomers retire, there will not be enough truck drivers out there. There is a similar problem with high turnover rates. One way in which the industry could retain drivers (besides higher salaries) is by improving their work conditions. Motor carriers and industry representatives should find ways to limit the co-morbidities associated with this lifestyle by improving insurance access, making sure their drivers can get to the doctor, limiting how much time a driver spends out on the road, and making sure that their equipment works correctly and safely to protect the occupant from chronic ailments like back pain. The FMCSA and other industry stakeholders could work on creating regulations that help foster healthy bodies rather than circumscribing unhealthy, dangerous bodies. FMCSA could work to find HOS that protect the safety of the public while also balancing drivers' need for adequate sleep and the realities of this workplace. Surely the amount of surveillance visited upon the bodies of truck drivers could also be used to foster occupational health for the good of the drivers.

Now we move on to Chapter 6 which also deals with the specific image of trucking and gender. This is a major change in trucking because women have been ignored in the

industry largely due to their small percentage in this workplace but also because some drivers seek to preserve the exclusionary hypermasculine environment of trucking.

## Chapter 6: Gender

“I like staying back out of the way while everybody gets their overcrowding [done] with. And I like being able to stay where I’m at and they can’t do anything about it. They want to rush up to you, shove you over, and they can’t. You can’t make me do that.

Earline

### **The Driver Shortage and Women Drivers**

The quote above is from Earline and she is describing the kinds of traffic conditions that drivers face every day. However, it also speaks to the general attitude that she developed in her time out on the road. Earline is powerful in her big rig and she cannot be pushed around by anybody. This is in direct contrast to how she was treated by an abusive husband. It also defies people in her life who tried to limit her mobility due to her gender. Earline, like other women I spoke with, found liberation in trucking.

The trucking industry is trying to get more women like Earline into the driver’s seat. There is a high turnover rate in this industry and trucking leaders claim there is an impending driver shortage as older drivers retire. A frequently cited solution to the problem of high turnover rates and a supposed driver shortage is increased recruiting among women (Global Insight, 2005). Several efforts at drawing more women into the industry include targeted advertising by companies as well as presentations at driving schools and trade shows by various trucking advocacy groups. However, the industry really has not done a very good job of making this a welcoming workplace for women.



In this chapter, I will argue that one of the major changes in the modern trucking industry is the recognition of women drivers and efforts at recruiting women to help with the driver shortage that comes out of a JIT economy. Trucking companies are increasingly targeting women for recruitment. Also, there are now organizations such as Women In Trucking (WIT) and Reaching Out, Encouraging Others, Achieving Personal Success, Leadership (REAL) Women in Trucking that work to encourage women to become truck drivers and to build a supportive network of other women drivers. Despite these efforts, gender discrimination and sexual harassment are pervasive in this industry and women are generally left to deal with an uncomfortable working environment on their own.

This is a highly masculinized industry and many male drivers do not want to lose that workplace culture. Some male drivers use varying forms of sexual and gendered harassment to make women feel uncomfortable and put them back into their place. These drivers do this through sexual harassment, rumor mongering, and sexual assault. Women who complain about this abuse are told to get used to it because it is a man's industry. All of my female respondents loved their job and as a result they must find ways to reconcile their identities as women with their identities as workers in order to keep their jobs. They use several tactics to counter sexual harassment through humor, smarting off, and building friendships with male drivers. Women will also work to exclude women who they feel are too flirtatious or sexual in order to protect their reputations among male coworkers. In essence, women turn on each other to mitigate the pain and fear of unabated harassment.

This narrative begins with a return to Earline's story to briefly discuss women and mobility. Then I describe how the interviewees got into the industry and how it has

changed them. Then I examine the discrimination and harassment that these women face as well the kinds of tactics that are used to stem harassment. Finally, I examine a feminization of this workplace that is increasingly used to justify women's presence in the industry. As a whole, this chapter will show how these women survive and resist in a work environment in which they make up only five percent of the driving population.

### **Situating Women Truck Drivers**

This research is located within three main areas of literatures that include gender and labor, mobility and gender, and sexual harassment. While geography has an abundance of literature about gender, labor, and mobility this research seeks to add an element of nuance by examining a workplace that has yet to be discussed in this discipline. By combining these sets of literatures with the empirical findings we are able to see ways in which this industry is much different from other spaces of labor because of its mobility and decentralization. Furthermore, there is little research in geography that specifically looks at the issue of sexual harassment and the workplace. The aim is to encourage more engagement in geography with this pervasive problem.

It is also necessary to explain that I am working through the theoretical lens of Judith Butler's work on gender and sexuality. Her concept of performativity speaks to the inherent instability of gender and sexuality (Butler, 1999). She argues that gender is a part of wider discourses that seek to dictate the appropriate ways for men and women to behave and thus to maintain the primacy of heterosexual relations within western culture (Butler, 1999). Specifically men and women are to behave in distinct ways that are polar opposites of each other to produce what are believed to be essentialized patterns of what

it means to be a male or female. According to Butler, gender is not something that is biological but rather an identity that is performed. These gender norms and performances get inscribed onto a wide variety of daily activities such as labor, cleaning, or caring. On the same token, place identity means that certain performances are expected in certain places (Rotundo, 1992; Valentine, 1996).

## **Gender and Labor**

Gender matters at work. Workers make a living in a “profoundly gendered global economy.” (Mills, 2003) At the most basic level the workplace has historically been seen as male space. Gender theorists locate these notions about gender and the workplace within the spatial differentiation between work and home that occurred in the Industrial Revolution (Kimmel, 1994 ; Rotundo, 1992). Men went out into the workplace while women stayed at home. The type of job in which a person engages is also gendered. Men’s jobs emphasize competition and emotional detachment (Kimmel 1994). Women are overrepresented in jobs that emphasize caring, submission, and repetition, while such jobs are seen as demeaning to men (Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1995; Wright, 2004). However, this gendered division of labor can be arbitrary with “women’s jobs” being relabeled “men’s jobs” through discursive elements about high/low skill, easy/hard work, and high/low cost labor (Boyer, 2004; A. Jones, 1998; Laurie, 1999; Massey, 1994; McDowell, 2003; Mills, 2003; Wright, 1997, 2004). This arbitrariness can also be seen in the fact that men and women can challenge gendered expectations in the workplace by emphasizing new constructions of masculinity and femininity (Bagilhole & Cross, 2006; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Secor, 2003).

There are some general findings about gender in the workplace that are found throughout research in geography on this topic. Women are paid less and advance at a slower pace than their male counterparts. Most women who work outside of the home are still responsible for childcare and the upkeep of the home (Hardy, Kozek, & Stenning, 2008; A. Jones, 1998; Tiano & Ladino, 1999).

### **Mobility and Gender**

Gender also matters in access to mobility. Mobility is a distinctly gendered experience that often means that women's mobility is to be controlled (Batnitzky, McDowell, & Dyer, 2008; S. Hanson, 2010; Uteng, 2009; Catharina Williams, 2005; Wilson, 1999) . This control ensures that women remain sexually pure and to protect their reputation because it is assumed that mobility gives people the opportunities to engage in activities, namely sexual, that they would not ordinarily do if they were at home (Keough, 2006; Kristeva, 1991; Porter, 2011). Women's absence from the home is also blamed for creating social chaos in their homes and community (Keough, 2006; Tiano & Ladino, 1999). On the more extreme side there is an association that links women's mobility with prostitution (Doezma, 2000; King & Vullnetari, 2009; Secor, 2003). Regardless of these limitations, women's mobility has increased particularly through migration for work (Batnitzky et al., 2008; King & Vullnetari, 2009; Catharina Williams, 2005; Wilson, 1999).

Women's mobility may put them in harm's way through rape or sexual assaults (King & Vullnetari, 2009; Porter, 2011; Catharina Williams, 2005) although women are also socialized to fear attacks when they are out in public in order to maintain the male

privilege of unfettered mobility (Day, 2001; Koskela, 1997; Pain, 1991; Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010; Valentine, 1989) However, increasing women's mobility is crucial because women are at a distinct disadvantage because of limited mobility. Lack of transportation may make it difficult for women to find work, get medical services, or even continue schooling (Mandel, 2006; Porter, 2011; Uteng, 2009). While there are negative aspects to being away from home, like missing children and homesickness, increasing women's mobility is seen to be a good thing. It allows women to gain self confidence and experience more control over their lives. Mobility can allow women to escape traditional norms like marriage and it allows women to gain knowledge about the world. (Batnitzky et al., 2008; Catharina Williams, 2005).

### **Sexual Harassment**

The modern workplace is constructed as a place where sexuality does not matter (Pringle, 1989; Christine Williams, Giuffre, & Dellinger, 1999). However, sex is very much a part of the working world (Adkins, 2000; Berebitsky, 2006; Dellinger & Williams, 2002; Elder, 1995; Kitiarsa, 2008; Knopp, 1997; McDowell & Court, 1994; Nencel, 2010; Ward & Winstanley, 2006; Warhurst & Nickson, 2009; Christine Williams et al., 1999; Yelvington, 1996). Sexuality can be strategically used by women to either get ahead or get along through sexualized banter, flirting, and even dating co-workers (Berebitsky, 2006; McDowell, 1995; Warhurst & Nickson, 2009; Yelvington, 1996) Women can also resist this sexualization usually through presenting themselves as 'ladies' or professionals. (Berebitsky, 2006; Nencel, 2010; Yelvington, 1996).

Examples abound of the ways in which sexuality is used against women in the workplace. This is particularly true in traditionally masculine occupations where just the presence of a woman's body appears to introduce sexuality into the workplace (Berebitsky, 2006; Christine Williams et al., 1999). Arguably these practices are also meant to put women in their place as evidenced by the extreme amount of sexual harassment experienced by women in the mining sector (Eveline & Booth, 2002; Gansler & Bingham, 2003). A lot of the sexually-based rhetoric involving women in the workplace surrounds how women dress and how a body might introduce sexuality at work (Nencel, 2010). Harassment can also be used by men as a form of male bonding (Bender, 2004; Quinn, 2000, 2002). As such it is important to note that while there is an element of sexuality in the workplace, sexual harassment and discrimination really are not about sex (Lee, 2001). It is about controlling women and reproducing male control of space (Herring, 1999; Ofarrell & Harlan, 1982; Padavic & Reskin, 1990; Quinn, 2000, 2002; Sasson-Levy, 2003). Also, it is rare for women to report sexual harassment because they want to avoid a hostile working environment or do not want to be labeled as a troublemaker (Lee, 2001; Magley, 2002; Miller, 1997; Quinn, 2000; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Valentine, 1997).

There is also a common refrain of 'boys will be boys' which justifies this behavior as something that naturally occurs among men and it is therefore useless to confront men about their behavior (Quinn, 2000, 2002) especially in blue collar trades. However, research in blue collar work environments actually finds that women will stay in a job even while being harassed or discriminated against because they like their job and the high rate of pay (Mansfield et al., 1991; Ofarrell & Harlan, 1982; Padavic & Reskin,

1990). Women in blue collar trades report they have to work twice as hard as men just to get accepted (Bartram & Shobrook, 1998).

### **Limiting Mobility**

As the research above demonstrates, women's mobility is constrained and patriarchal cultures work to maintain that condition (Batnitzky et al., 2008; S. Hanson, 2010; Uteng, 2009; Catharina Williams, 2005; Wilson, 1999). Earline's story is also emblematic of how women are limited in their mobility because of their gender. However, her story also shows that not all men try to limit women's mobility. In fact, they can be supportive.

Earline's father was a truck driver and he actively encouraged her to pursue hobbies, such as go-kart racing, that challenged the prevailing gender norms. When she was 17, Earline's father began to teach her to drive a truck. Unfortunately, his boss had a problem with this arrangement and she was no longer allowed to drive or ride with her father. The following exchange captures the moment where a father is heartbroken to see how his capable daughter is limited by her sex, even though she really was not surprised.

VK: What did he say?

Earline: I don't know... Daddy comes home one day and told Mama to tell me because he couldn't tell me himself...I was never allowed in the truck with him again.

VK: How did that make you feel?

Earline: Disappointed but I was a girl and I was getting...by then I realized there was a lot of things that guys didn't want girls to do.

The interesting part of this exchange is the fact that Earline's father is disappointed that someone has squashed his daughter's mobility although it did not surprise Earline in the least. Like most women, she was all too aware of how she was limited by her gender.

Another important aspect to this story is that it points to the fact that in a patriarchal culture, acquiescence to gender norms is often uneven, even in the 1950s. Later in Earline's career, she found male truck drivers that were also supportive of her as well. When I spoke with male drivers about women they often said that women have a place in the industry. So despite the fact this research focuses on harassment by men, it is important to note that not all men are participating in marginalizing women.

Earline's future husband taught her how to drive a truck and she drove team with him until they divorced. Unfortunately, Earline's father died when she was 22 and he never knew that she had 'made it'. While Earline was out on the road with her husband, she mainly had to deal with his temper and emotional abuse. However, once she went out on the road by herself, she had to deal with the hostility of other male drivers. Yet, she still found ways to survive and flourish in this industry.

Earline's story foreshadows this chapter's examination of the all too common reality of sexual harassment in the industry. This harassment is a tool to make women feel out of place and it reproduces the hypermasculinity of this workplace. The mobility makes it difficult to police this kind of behavior. In the next section, I look at why women become truck drivers and how it has changed them.



## **Changed Women**

Feminist scholars have argued that women can find freedom and more control in their home by engaging in paid labor (Hays-Mitchell, 1999; Meier, 1999; Mills, 2003; Secor, 2003; Catharina Williams, 2005). It is increasingly common for women to include waged work as a normal part of their role as a mother so that they can provide a better life for their offspring (Tiano & Ladino, 1999). This is definitely true for my respondents.

Trucking presented them with an opportunity of economic empowerment. Most of these women worked for low pay in pink collar jobs or factories prior to truck driving. Driving a truck allowed these women to dramatically increase their income which gave them financial freedom and a way to support their family members. In some cases, trucking allowed these women to get more control over their lives and recover from divorces.

The appeal of trucking goes beyond the monetary gain. These women *wanted* to be driving. All of the women drivers that I spoke with said the mobility and freedom inherent to the job were two of the best features. Many had spent their whole lives wanting to do this job and many of these women were told that they could not be truck drivers because they were women. The women drivers I spoke with saw trucking as a chance of a lifetime. Some women specifically linked trucking to their mortality; they did not want to regret not trying to achieve their dream of driving.

These women also had to cope with being in a workplace that, in a lot of ways, is not friendly to women. Tammy explained that she knew she would have to toughen up to be successful in the industry even while she was driving with her husband. The job gave her more “balls” as she learned to speak up for herself and not “take any crap”. Josie faced

vicious sexually based rumors from male coworkers who sought to discredit her work as a driver. She learned to dismiss this kind of harassment with the knowledge that they simply do not know her. Now, as a nurse, her coworkers are impressed at how calm she is even in the middle of office politics. She tells them,

“It’s come from a long time of taking insults...it makes you a stronger person.

One obstacle for women in the trucking industry is that they are inserting different bodies into a world of male bodies. The most basic difference in the embodied experience of women is the issue of going to the bathroom. Men can urinate in more places than women. In earlier decades, it was often difficult to just find a bathroom for women to use much less take a shower. In some cases, women were forced to rent a motel or bathe in a bathroom sink.

These physical differences carry over to ideas about how women drive trucks and how well they can drive trucks. A supposed lack strength is often used to keep women out of blue collar jobs (Reskin & Padavic, 1988). This idea rests on an essentializing discourse that all men are stronger than all women instead of some men are stronger than some women (Day, 2001) . Trucking is no exception in this regard. There is an assumption that women drivers are weaker and not able to do heavy lifting. However, as Earline argued, women adapt. She may not be as strong as her male counterparts but she developed other ways to get the job done safely without hurting herself. It is also thought that women have a difficult time learning to back a truck up but all of the women I interviewed had learned to do this well with some practice. There is also the assumption that women

cannot navigate but Tammy found as soon as she learned the cardinal directions, she had a better sense of direction than her husband.<sup>25</sup>

One theme that I heard from men was that trucking had gotten physically ‘easier’ with the invention of things like air ride, power steering, and automatic transmissions so this made it easier for women to enter this field. The ‘easiness’ has not really translated into more women into the industry. The percentage of women in this industry is a mere 5.4 percent (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Male drivers often say that they are seeing more and more women but the reality is that women are so unusual in this industry that you cannot help but notice when you see one. Judith ran a dedicated route along with 79 men for several years. She said that she was so ‘unusual’ that a lot of drivers knew exactly who she was despite the fact she had never even met most of these men. It became ‘cool’ if you got to know her. The rarity of seeing a female driver is also demonstrated in a comment by Tammy who loved it when kids in passenger vehicles saw she was a woman because she would see them yelling to their parents ‘It’s a girl! It’s a girl!’

In some ways, women’s bodies do not fit into this workspace but the process of finding a place in trucking helped these women build confidence. Once these women learned to

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<sup>25</sup> Being able to back a truck up is a crucial skill. Once a driver masters this skill, it is an immediate confidence builder and helps you earn more respect from other drivers. One female driver tried to claim that women’s brains are ‘wired differently’ which she said makes it difficult to learn how to back a truck up. Josie, who was a driving trainer, argued that women actually had better depth perception than men. Josie said that women were better trainers for women because men were not as patient. However, this is dicey territory for women because some may never acquire this skill either out of fear or because they have a team driver. As Lori warns, women who do not learn the skill and instead allow men to do it for them set themselves up for problems with confidence and safety if they allow strangers to do this for them. Similarly women who are team driving with their husband, boyfriend, male co-driver have no recourse if something happens to their co-driver and put themselves at a real disadvantage

back a truck up, deal with directions, and find ways to do various tasks safely these women felt capable of doing the job just as well as men.

## **Harassment and Discrimination**

Sexual harassment is common in traditionally masculine occupations such as mining (Berebitsky, 2006; Eveline & Booth, 2002; Gansler & Bingham, 2003; Christine Williams et al., 1999). The goal is to put women in their place. Most of my female respondents described at least some experience of discrimination and harassment. What is unique about harassment in trucking is that women drivers do not just face these issues with coworkers, their mobility opens them to a wide variety of spaces where they face this danger. These women face harassment from coworkers, other semi drivers on the road, men driving passenger cars, and the customers. The hypermasculinity of this industry is so entrenched that women are told that they must adapt to sexism in order to survive.

According to Josie, harassment started in trucking school and carried over into other spaces like warehouses and truck stops. At several points I heard women say that they were told that women needed to get used to harassment because that is just what happens in trucking since it is a male dominated industry. One woman basically said that because of this, women should expect 'a little' harassment.

A lot of women experience harassment during the training phase which is a particularly vulnerable time for women as they are typically put on a truck with a perfect stranger. There is a shortage of female trainers so women go with male trainers or they do not get trained. The mobility can prevent women from escaping or they may be abandoned

while out on the road. According to Desiree and Tonya it is well known that some trainers get involved with training so that they can take advantage of new female recruits. Basically, such men would find the woman's "weak points" and then use those to gain mental and physical control over the women.

Tonya concludes that male drivers think women drivers are there to "service" them.

Tonya's trainer consistently came on to her but she refused his advances. She woke up one night to find that he was fondling her. He apparently thought she would give in if he caught her in a moment where she was comfortable and not alert. Luckily she was able to fight him off but her dispatcher dismissed her complaint and said 'That's part of trucking'. In the case of Jennifer she initially denied she dealt with harassment. But when I asked her specifically about the training period she admitted that at the time she did not think it was harassment but in hindsight she should have turned him in. First he came on to her by pulling her into his lap while he was sitting in the bunk. Then he went on to bring a pornographic magazine onto the truck to share with her. When she told him that it made her uncomfortable, he tried to deny that it was pornographic<sup>26</sup>.

Rumor mongering among men is relatively common as well. Usually the rumors say the women are sluts or prostitutes and these rumors can follow these women throughout their career at a truck carrier. Consider Michelle's conversation with a male coworker:

"He said, 'Do you understand the reputation that you've already got?' [I said] 'I haven't done anything'. 'It's because you're a single woman in that atmosphere.' And that already made me a slut in their eyes".

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<sup>26</sup> This scenario of men introducing pornography into the workplace is not unusual. I have seen it discussed by several women in trucking and this practice has come up in numerous other blue collar workplaces that were investigated for hostile work environments.

Josie, was painfully aware of the fact that older men in the company told newer employees that she was sleeping with everybody and she found this to be emotionally devastating<sup>27</sup>. Desiree Wood makes the assertion that male drivers are aware of how damaging their rumor mongering is and an inattentive management can make the problem even worse.

“...these guys are acutely aware of how easily they can tarnish your reputation in this male dominated industry. Once you have got that label on you it’s hard to shake. If you are in a company like me where there is little interaction between the management and drivers those rumors and unsupervised childishness explodes.” (Wood, 2008)

The decentralized, mobile nature of the trucking industry allows a lot of threatening behavior to go on unfettered. Women truck drivers do not just face harassment from people in their company. They are also harassed by drivers from other companies and by the general public. Judith relays a story of a passenger car driver who was masturbating and tried to block her in so that she could not pass him. This man scared her although she was able to run him off the road. According to Judith men really do not understand how these kinds of incidents can create a truly frightening work environment for women<sup>28</sup>. When Judith told this story to a male friend and her boss, they actually laughed about the incident even though Judith was clearly disturbed. She asks “Why should I be subjected to that?” Indeed, why should someone have to endure such predation when they are just trying to do their jobs?

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<sup>27</sup> Josie now laughs about the rumors because she definitely was not sleeping with other drivers. She was sleeping with the boss who, she adds, demonstrated a surprising lack of favoritism despite their personal relationship.

<sup>28</sup> Men, too, face women flashing them on the highway but their attitudes are dramatically different. One driver told me that he was going to look if they showed it. Another jokingly described his last female flasher as being ‘corn fed.’ Clearly men are not as threatened as women are but the men’s reactions might have been different if I had asked about being flashed by men, which does happen.

Women drivers in this industry face rumors, come-ons, and assault, as well as other indicators of a hostile work environment, like the introduction of pornography on the truck. The mobility of the job means that women face these issues in a wide variety of spaces rather than one localized working environment. The decentralized, mobile nature of this job also makes it difficult to police these kinds of behavior. The obvious male domination and privilege allows this kind of behavior to be viewed as a natural consequence of a hypermasculine workplace. However, as the next section will show, women use a variety of tactics to push back against discrimination and masculinity.

### **Resistance**

Women typically do not report being sexually harassed at work. (Lee, 2001; Magley, 2002; Miller, 1997; Quinn, 2000; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Valentine, 1997). However, women in trucking have found ways to resist and cope with discrimination and harassment. These tactics must be adapted for the myriad of places that women might encounter uncomfortable and threatening scenarios. Some of the tactics are simple and common sense and other tactics include using humor to disarm sexism.

Women will wear a wedding band to give men the message that they are not available. They may also take dogs out on the truck to alert them of potential attackers. Women also say that walking with authority or like you “own the place” in truck stops and rest areas was mentioned by several women; this was a way to assert their legitimacy to be in this space. Some women do not get out of their trucks after dark. Earline felt so threatened in places like truck stops that she would drive through the night and would sleep during the

day time when truck stops are less active. Michelle would give rides to women who were stranded by their husbands, boyfriends, or trainers after being kicked off the truck.

One of my favorite tactics of resistance involves humor where women would make some sort of joke or “mouth off” to diffuse tension and make the offending driver look foolish.

Here is Tonya,

“I was driving cautiously in a construction zone and the guys behind me were getting mad. When they found out I was a woman they started talking on the CB about how I didn’t belong out there anyway, I should be home in kitchen, bedroom etc. I said ‘I’ve got PMS and you’ve hurt my feelings. Now I’m going to have to drive slower.’ The other guys started laughing and one said ‘You should have kept your mouth shut, Driver. Now you’ve made her mad’”.

And Judith,

“I had guys threaten to kill me because I didn’t belong out on the road...they’d bitch because I was driving a slow truck. And I’d say “Hell they pay me for going slow. I might just back up. Look at all the extra money I would make.”

And Judith again

This customer “..wouldn't even look at me. And when he'd hand me my paperwork he'd tell me truck drivers were assholes. Everyday I'd sign the paper and I'd leave. Finally one day he was busy doing something else and he handed me the paper work and just looked back down and didn't say anything. I just stood there. Finally he said 'Yeah?' and I said ‘You forgot to tell me I was an asshole.’ And he and I were the best of friends after that. I'd have to go in early and he'd have doughnuts and coffee waiting for me... But you've got to develop an attitude or you're not going to survive or you're going to be very bitter.”

Josie while trying to get her trailer to fit on a dock was

“...jumping up and down trying to get it to go down on my truck. And there’s like four or five guys...and they’re talking about me...You know they’re watching me jump up and down and they’re watching my boobs bounce...I holler across and say ‘Hey you know one of you assholes should come over and help me get this down rather than watching my tits go up and down’ The three young guys, man



they were gone. Couldn't believe I actually called them out on it...the two old guys walked over 'Okay, we'll help ya'. That's the kind of stuff you put up with".

Finally Earline who says some people just can't believe little old ladies drive trucks.

"...People say 'You drive that truck all by yourself?' I had one friend who said 'Well I do have a little poodle with me but he doesn't do a very good job.'"

A little contextualization is needed to fully understand what is going on in these quotes.

Judith probably has a governor on her truck or her company is enforcing slower speeds to save on fuel costs and Tonya is following the legal speed limit in a construction zone.

There is not much they can do about their speed. Josie is working on a task that male drivers also have to face, she just happens to have breasts which are quite often the subject of the male gaze. Other women drivers have mentioned how customers can be quite rude to women in ways that men simply do not experience. It is probably unlikely that a customer would call a male driver an asshole on a regular basis. Furthermore, as Earline's anecdote demonstrates, older women have to deal with both gender and ageism just to get their job done.

These quotes demonstrate that even though these women are dealing with very real instances of gendered and sexual harassment, they are able to stand up for themselves.

These stories are also a testament to the strong personalities of these women who are working in a man's place. They inhabit bodies that are not supposed to be there. So these men sexualize and dismiss these women to put them in their place. While these women are not able to totally up end gender norms in this workplace, they can use their mouths to make their bodies fit and claim their legitimacy for being in this space. As Judith

explained in the quote above, these tactics of mouthing off were vital for survival in this industry as a woman. Josie also said that

“...it’s a man’s industry and either you...flip it right back to them or you’re going to sink...you’re going to go home crying every day.”

Mouthing off puts the attacker in their place but it also helps these women mitigate the very real fear and hurt that can come out of these kinds of sexist scenarios. There is also an important factor that might get lost in the process of analysis and that is the fact that, even with all of the obstacles, these women love their jobs. They want to be in this workplace and they are willing to do what it takes to remain there. Their presence in this difficult industry is not just about the money.

### **Working with Women**

The disheartening reality of this workplace is that a lot of women out on the road have very negative attitudes about other women drivers and in many cases women are not supportive of each other at all. It is important to pay attention to the fact that some women *prefer* to work in a male dominated workplace, like trucking, because some women drivers had very negative attitudes about working with and around women. As this section and subsequent sections will show, women in this industry are extremely critical of each other. Stephanie said that women were ‘nitpicky’, ‘backstabbing’, ‘dangerous’, and ‘not nice people’. She felt that men were more honest and easygoing in the workplace.

Maya socialized mainly with men particularly Native American men. However, like others I spoke with, Maya is offended by women who appear to be ‘husband hunting’ or

too flirtatious. Maya is also critical of women who are teaming with a man because she thinks they “need a man to survive”. In fact, her assessment of these women is really quite harsh and she calls them ‘steering wheel holders’ which is a demeaning CB term used for unskilled drivers and the term ‘seatcovers’ which is a sexist term also used on the CB that clearly objectifies women riding in the truck or in a passenger vehicle. Maya particularly dislikes the idea that standards might be lowered to allow women to enter into this male dominated workplace<sup>29</sup>.

Tonya had the best description about how women view other women drivers when she said

“It’s like they have the attitude ‘I’m the first woman out there. I’m the best women out there. I’m the only woman out there’ and they will not communicate at all... That’s one of the things that disheartened me is because women just do not communicate and get along the way the men do...”

The takeaway message from Tonya’s quote is that this is not a sisterhood despite the fact that women are minorities and deal with many of the same issues. Although there are efforts to get women to network and support each other, many women continue to be very critical of other women drivers. At several points in this section it will be clear that women often throw each other under the bus in order to survive harassment.

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<sup>29</sup> Much of Maya’s own self respect is based on the fact that she has been successful in male dominated jobs with very little help. In her words she would probably say she did not get the benefits of so-called affirmative action which she thinks means lowering standards for unqualified workers. She was particularly angry about motor carriers that encouraged women to drive for them because they have automatic transmissions rather than manual shift, which is supposed to be “harder” for women to drive.

## 'Lady' Drivers

One tactic for dealing with discrimination and harassment was to police the bodies and behaviors of other women drivers so that they look better in front of the men. This is relatively common in a variety of workplaces (A. Jones, 1998; McDowell, 1995; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Sasson-Levy, 2003). What is interesting about this workplace is that these women tear each other down because they are trying to show men that they can behave themselves out on the road. So it is not enough to simply say that women do not get along with each other in this workplace. There are specific, discursive ways that women legitimate their presence in the workplace by discrediting other women.

Female drivers are highly critical of other women's bodies because they think inappropriate dress and behavior competes with their attempts to be respectable and avoid discrimination and harassment. The typical term that is used to describe whether a woman passed muster or not was 'ladylike'. Several of the respondents talked about the idea of 'ladylike' and how many women did not live up to the status of lady, usually because of how they behaved around male drivers and how they dressed. Earline describes what a lady is by describing how she behaves when she says

“That means I do not use coarse language and I don't gossip and I don't smoke. I don't drink. I don't party.”

This lack of objectionable behavior supposedly fosters respect from her male peers. However, within Earline's account there is an intriguing use of the word 'lady'. It is common to use the term 'lady truck driver' as a general term for women in the industry

and so Earline is careful to distinguish between a 'lady truck driver' and a '*lady* truck driver' when she says

“We’ve had the lady truck drivers that smoke and drink and cuss and party and walk around like ‘Hey I’m a woman and I deserve your attention’ and I don’t do that. And so it’s different.”

Earline goes on to describe how the women’s dress and her comportment are also objectionable.

“Well when you don’t wear a bra and you wear a t-shirt and you walk up to a guy and you snuggle up to him all the time and a guy’s got a wife and kids...He doesn’t like it.”

In some ways Earline’s description of these women’s behavior makes it sound as if women drivers are harassing the men.

In the process of differentiating themselves from these unladylike bodies sometimes the women will confront the woman displaying questionable behaviors. However, it is important to keep in mind that the audience for these responses is male drivers. Michelle confronted a woman driver who was ‘flirting her ass off’ on the CB one evening. It seems this woman thought ‘she was all that’ and she engaged in some sexualized banter with the men on the radio. So a male driver offers to stop and fuel her truck up for her. This angers Michelle because she thinks this woman is using sex to avoid work. So Michelle decides that she has to stop at the truck stop and see what kind of woman this is. Sure enough, the woman is dressed unladylike. She has on high heels, a revealing top, a skirt that was much too short, and she was ‘ugly.’ Michelle felt compelled to walk up to the woman and ask ‘What street corner did you just come off of?’ and, according to her, male

bystanders erupted into laughter. Then Michelle proceeded to confront the driver who fueled the woman's truck and define the term lady for him.

“...there's six trucks lined up right over there...All of them are going to get her too...that's not a lady, Driver. That's not a lady”.

In the case of Earline she told her boss she was going to run over an offending woman and 'he knew' she 'meant it.' On other occasions she 'smarts off' to the women by saying 'Why don't you clean up a little, honey?' or 'Watch your mouth'. However, she often resists this last tactic because it causes an uncomfortable working environment. Instead, she and the other drivers will 'ostracize' the woman because

“It's difficult to work with a team with someone you're uncomfortable with. The guy's uncomfortable because he wouldn't want his wife to know he's working with someone like that. The women are uncomfortable because they don't want people to think they're like that.”

So it is clear that, like Michelle, Earline's efforts to appear different from these unladylike women are directed towards male drivers who maintain the hypermasculinity of the industry by harassing and ostracizing women.

Earline's account of what constitutes a lady usually hinges on behavior. When I asked her whether it was possible to dress in a t-shirt (assuming she is also wearing a bra) and jeans but not use profanity or abuse substances *and* be a lady (or at least get respect) her response was much less accusatory.

“I've known them like that and you know they're sweet ladies and nobody thinks anything of it. You see it's really the mouth that gets them in trouble...the crude retorts, the innuendoes...I know one lady everybody just loved her. She was overweight...she had bad teeth...not an unattractive woman but her physical

being wasn't in the best care... But she had a very gentle spirit and was dearly beloved."

So we see some of the same body criticisms that come out of this idea of ladylike but we also see how the body combined with the behavior is what pushes women into the "unladylike" category<sup>30</sup>.

By labeling these women as unladylike, Earline and Michelle set themselves apart from other women drivers who they think reproduce unrestrained sexuality in this highly mobile workplace. In some ways these threats and comments are disturbing because it is slut shaming; they are verbally marking boundaries between good women and bad women by policing bodies and sexuality. Yet these women face a significant amount of discrimination and harassment so they want to prove that they are worthy of being in this workplace by "behaving" themselves and shaming the unladylike women who do not "behave" themselves. They are legitimizing their presence on the road in order to avoid negative attention from men who use harassment as a way to maintain male privilege

### **One of the Guys**

Another way in which women avoided harassment and discrimination was by befriending male drivers. It was also a way to feel safe on the road. Since this is a male dominated workplace, it is advantageous to have male friends, boyfriends, or husbands around because, according to women drivers at least, women get less harassment when they are with men. The women I spoke with developed relationships with male drivers where they

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<sup>30</sup> What we do not see in this account is how *men* behave in this workplace. That is an important question because the traditional assumption about being a 'lady' is that men can use profanity and tell crude jokes but women cannot. I wonder whether Earline's male co-workers avoided such behavior among themselves as a general practice or if they censored their own behavior for the benefit of 'ladies' like Earline.

were just ‘one of the guys’<sup>31</sup>. These men also respected the driving skills of women like Judith, Earline, and Michelle and they even encouraged their own companies to recruit them. These relationships show that not all men are out tormenting women although clearly men are in control of these scenarios; after all the men are not trying to become one of the girls to survive their work environment.

Being one of the guys usually involves an understanding that the woman is not only ‘one of the guys’ but she is also a ‘lady’ that must be protected from those outside of the circle. So even with light flirting, she is always off-limits for dating. As Michelle explains,

“I didn’t get harassed. They would tease me and cut up with me. We’d get to flirting like that but they never took it over the line and that showed me I earned that respect. I didn’t have to do anything except be myself and be a driver. And they know nothing will ever happen between us.”

Michelle was inducted into a boys club through teasing and light flirting but her gender still marked her as someone that is unusual and needs to be protected. Michelle used a very interesting turn of phrase that underscores this positioning when she said ‘They never treated me like a woman unless the situation should arise.’ She becomes a woman when she is in danger.<sup>32</sup> Although Michelle is no longer driving she still keeps in contact with the men she drove with. Similarly, Judith spoke with her former coworkers frequently on the phone.

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<sup>31</sup> A lot of this camaraderie is fostered through something known as ‘running together’ which describes a situation where trucks stay in close proximity of each other and this often involves talking on the CB. Ideally, you also stop at the same places to eat, get coffee, or stay overnight. This is how Michelle, Judith, and Earline were able to build relationships.

<sup>32</sup> In one instance, her buddies did beat up another driver who made advances towards her. Physical violence also came into play when a male coworker asked her friend if he was “doin’ her.”



While it is clear that these women have found a supportive network of men at their workplace, their admission to the boy's club was not easy initially. Women spoke of having to prove themselves to men before they were accepted. Earline and Judith found that once drivers knew they could do the job just as well as men and were not looking for help, they garnered respect from those men

However, men still controlled the relationships in some more subtle ways. Earline and Judith both explained that the men basically control the contact on the CB radio. Judith found that she really did not have a lot to say in some conversations that were about things like guns or military stories so she would just stay silent. Earline would stop talking when men began to veer into more salty topics. In both cases the men would try to get them back into the conversation so a lot of this was unintentional. But it is another reminder of how much this industry is directed by male prerogative.

Being one of the guys can also mean that some women participate in marginalizing other women drivers. For example, saying that a woman driver was also a prostitute was common among men and women. The rumors came from men initially but some women helped to perpetuate them. In this next quote, Earline explains how she knew that women were moonlighting as sex workers.

“Well, let's put it this way - the guys tell me. Okay? The women don't tell me. The guys do. You know 'she works' and I know exactly what they mean when they say that. And I said 'Well are you sure?' You know. That's always my first question, you know give her a little room here. And 'oh yeah... she's working over here.'”

Even though Earline tries to give these women the benefit of the doubt by asking “are you sure?” she still takes the word of her male coworkers. This is strange in light of the

fact that when she initially entered the industry men tried to say women like her were prostitutes.

However, Michelle and Tonya knew women who were engaging in sex work on the road and Michelle actually reported two women who worked for her company after hearing them advertise commercial company in a rest area. Apparently there are women who may be “working in the bunk.” On the other hand other drivers I spoke with denied this was an issue. But knowing the ways in which heterosexism and misogyny work to control women’s experience in the workplace I am inclined to believe that saying a female driver is a prostitute is mainly a way for men to put women in their place. In turn, the women believe the men and repeat these rumors in an attempt to differentiate themselves from the ‘bad girls’. So these rumors are not accidents. There is intent by men *and* women to defame women drivers.

By making friends with male drivers, women were able to feel safer as well as make lifelong friends. In some ways these relationships helped challenge hypermasculinity. Women could work and socialize out on the road under the protection of male privilege. Unfortunately, in some cases, being one of the guys also meant excluding other women to maintain their position as a guy.

### **Gender Expression**

Another way in which women worked to get along with men and avoid uncomfortable encounters on the road was by modifying their expressions of gender. As mentioned before, this is a workplace that is dominated by masculinity. Women stand out in this industry so it would be reasonable to assume that women act more masculine to fit in

although some women refused to change their gender performance to fit into this workplace.

Judith said that survival in this industry meant that women have to stop thinking about themselves as females. Tammy explained that this is not a job for a “fluffy” girl, meaning that a woman truck driver cannot be concerned about her nails breaking, getting dirty, or putting make up on every day. Stephanie said she got more respect because of the fact she was not “prissy...frilly...” and didn’t “fawn over men”. Cynthia also admits that she is more masculine when she is on the job. In fact she made a distinction between her gender at work where she acted more masculine and her off time where she was more feminine.

So we can see how women do resort to more masculine behavior to make it in the industry. This is in line with McDowell’s (1995) argument that women are afraid of being exposed as being women so they will take on more masculine dress or behavior to get by. So behaving more like a man helps women get along in this workplace where masculine hegemony is the predominant gender expression (Bartram & Shobrook, 1998; Sasson-Levy, 2003).

However, in this highly masculinized industry, some women outright refused to hide their femininity. Tonya, Earline, and Desire flatly rejected the idea that they had to be more masculine to succeed in this job. Tonya said that this idea ‘irritates’ her and that she regularly wears dresses to go out for restaurant meals. She was also critical of women who choose to dress and act like men. Some of these women felt that acting like a man was contrary to their self identity and their girliness was a way to resist the male domination in this industry. I found that some women feel compelled to shore up their

femininity through a variety of ways like manicures and pedicures, makeup, and carefully plucked eyebrows.

Sometimes being a woman gets stuff done so some women will manipulate gendered scripts to do their job. Josie played like she was a “dumb blonde” and flirted with men to get their help. These gendered variations actually helped her do her job better and faster than male drivers because men were willing to help her load and unload her truck.

Returning to Cynthia, she goes “back and forth” between masculine and feminine behavior at work so that she can get help. As this quote demonstrates, she actually changed her comportment and facial expressions to make a man “feel big and strong.”

“It’s more of a case of smiling...maybe make myself a little shorter, smaller...eye contact...just get that kind of helpless thing going..”

She also found that a lot of men would help her without her asking and she wondered if this happened simply because of her petite body.

Tonya introduced an interesting dilemma for women involving help. She described a situation where men look down on women who have a hard time doing some of the more physical tasks like sliding tandems and closing trailer doors. Some men refuse to help if they are asked but if she did not ask for help the men would get angry because they thought she was being uppity. However, women, like Maya, are infuriated by women who use their gender and sex to do their job. Yet, Tonya makes the valid argument that ‘everybody needs help’ occasionally, even men.

“They look at it because we are females and we’re incompetent but even men who’ve been out there 10, 20, 30 years they at time need help...[the attitude] is that we don’t need to be out here. We’re not capable of doing the job.”

Women's experience of gender out on the road is complicated. On one hand, women work to minimize their femininity in order to fit in with the men and avoid harassment. In fact, some women are proud of their ability to behave like one of the guys. On the other hand, women may emphasize their femininity as a backlash against hypermasculinity and to preserve their own identity as a woman.

### **An Industry for Women?**

The gender of a job can change by emphasizing and deemphasizing various gendered performances (Rotundo, 1992). In trucking, there is a feminization of the workplace that is taking place currently and it stems from an intriguing discourse that says women are as good as or better truck drivers than men. At the same time, there are organizations that have been formed to make this a safe workplace for women. In this section I will highlight a new discourse about women that says women are actually *better* drivers than men. I also examine two organizations, Women in Trucking and REAL Women in Trucking that seek to encourage women to enter into the industry. All three examples in this section show ways in which the hypermasculinity are challenged as well as helping women navigate the mobile workplace.

One owner of a trucking company was particularly insistent on this theme. He called the idea that women did not belong out on the road to be 'total, complete nonsense' and men who say this are 'blowhards'<sup>33</sup>. He uses his female employee as an example by saying that she is 126 pounds and is five feet seven yet she can successfully load a trailer and

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<sup>33</sup> His attitude is particularly interesting in the fact that his company hauls loads on flatbed where drivers are responsible for chaining and locking down their load. Usually male drivers see flatbed as being the one niche that women simply cannot be successful in because it involves heavy physical labor like working with chains. Plus this is a company that hauls unusually heavy loads of machinery.

lock it down and says she is ‘just as good as any man’. Apparently, she manages to maintain her femininity because according to him she can shower, ‘come out like a queen’ and ‘drive like the dickens.’<sup>34</sup>

However, while he believes ‘a woman can do anything she wants to’ and that gender does not play a role in who he hires, his characterization of women being better drivers actually pivots on the skills that are usually seen to be feminine in nature. He says that women take better care of his equipment than men, keep up with their log books, and are better about organization. I also heard male drivers make similar assertions. The women I interviewed claimed their bosses were interested in hiring women for many of the same reasons. Women supposedly pay more attention on the road, have fewer accidents, and do not speed. Furthermore, women are better with customers because they are more ‘pleasant’ and less likely to get angry.

On the other hand, I spoke with women who readily admitted that they drove faster than the speed limit, their log books were not always accurate (as did most drivers), and they had accidents. Plus, the men I interviewed were just as interested in good customer relations. These men took pride in a clean, professional appearance and behavior as well as having their paperwork in order for the customer.

Other challenges to the hypermasculinity of the industry involves the non-profit Women in Trucking (WIT) and the social media networking group “R.E.A.L Women in Trucking.” These two groups highlight the ways in which women’s issues in this workplace are framed and contested. Both groups are encouraging women to get into

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<sup>34</sup> She’s also a valuable employee as evidenced by the fact that he bailed her out of jail after an unfortunate incident where she bumped the moving car of a Department of Transportation official who had failed to turn his headlights on.

trucking but they have different approaches. This section is based on a discourse analysis of WIT's newsletters dating back to 2007, web posts by Desiree Wood of R.E.A.L. Women in Trucking, and personal interviews with Ellen Voie in May and Desiree Wood in June of 2011.

Women in Trucking was founded in 2007 by Ellen Voie.<sup>35</sup> WIT's mission is to "encourage the employment of women in the trucking industry, promote their accomplishments and minimize obstacles faced by women in trucking"(Voie, 2007).

While their core members are usually drivers, this group is also concerned about non-driving women being represented in the industry such as dispatchers, mechanics, company owners, and truck sales representatives. They also created a website with a forum that was to be a sounding board for members but also a place where women could get information about good trucking schools and companies as well as find mentors and networking.

WIT wants to make this industry more "female friendly". This includes trucks that ergonomically correct and fit women's smaller bodies ("International Trucks Measures Drivers," 2007; Voie, 2007) and truck stops that carried women's hygiene products and smaller sized clothing. Truck stops were also encouraged to give women two towels so they can dry their bodies and hair after showers and hooks where women can hang their

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<sup>35</sup> Ellen was in charge of recruiting woman and minorities for Schneider. She was also the former head of Trucker Buddy, also a non-profit that arranged for pen pal relationships between elementary school classes and professional truck drivers.

purses. So a lot of their mission was based on the idea that women have different bodies that trucks stops need to be catered to.<sup>36</sup>

According to WIT women drivers are vulnerable out on the road and this comes across in several articles for the newsletter. One article emphasized that women were not strong enough to protect themselves so their mobility was unsafe. In issue five, an article about women and safety said “On the road you are alone, vulnerable, and a target for any would be criminal to make you his victim.” (D. Brown, 2007). One article stated “Most women do not have the strength to defend themselves” (“Safety Tips for Drivers,” 2007). Then there is an article written by Ellen Voie that labels “truck stops, shipping docks and rest areas” as places of danger for women because they lack physical strength (Voie, 2009). Other articles are half hearted attempts at suggesting ways in which women can avoid being harassed. In one article, women are told to “avoid inappropriate language or flirtations with co-workers” (“Safety Tips for Drivers,” 2007) and to wear clothes that “cover” her (“Driver's 15 Steps to Personal Safety,” 2009).

This continual emphasis on women’s lack of physical strength and vulnerability is deeply disempowering. Even if all men were stronger than all women why would not WIT consider encouraging women to take self defense courses, for example? As it stands women are told to make sure they have their IDs on them and carry cell phones but there is little advice about real things women can do to protect themselves. The suggestions that women should not use profanity, flirt, or wear revealing clothing does little to give

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<sup>36</sup> WIT also started an annual celebration called “Salute to Women Behind the Wheel” during the Mid Atlantic Truck Show (MATS) where they were given gift bags, meet with some leader in the trucking industry, and get groups photos of all the women drivers. Ellen Voie also went to CDL school and wrote a book called Crushing Cones about her experience so women drivers knew what trucking school would be like.



women a sense of control over their environment or bodies. It also tacitly blames women for when they do get attacked. Predators are still in power with that approach.

However, several years later WIT said they were not going to help women drivers who are dealing with sexual harassment. In fact, in a spring 2011 newsletter, WIT tells women to not contact them if they have been sexually harassed or discriminated against because they

“... do not have the resources or expertise to insert ourselves in disputes between drivers and their carriers.” (“Women in Trucking: Past, Present, and Future,” 2011)

I also found several posts on the WIT website forum where a member dismissed sexual harassment claims and said most women are “crying wolf” (Long, 2008). She also provided incorrect information about what legally constitutes sexual harassment by claiming hostile work environment is “namby pamby” sexual harassment and quid pro quo is real sexual harassment (Long, 2009 ).

In my personal interview with Ellen Voie, she clearly thought sexual harassment was wrong and saw it as a negative aspect of the industry. She was critical of dispatchers who told their employees to just deal with harassment because that is the way trucking is. She also stressed that women need to report harassment. WIT in collaboration with J.K. Keller and Associates has created a manual for trucking companies on ways to avoid sexual harassment suits (Voie, 2011). The main theme of the manual is that harassment is a liability issue and it is bad for business. It says that companies must address this issue if they are going to make sure that “female employees feel wanted, needed, and safe”. The manual instructs companies to create effective training programs to help employees

understand what sexual harassment is. The manual also specifically states that regardless how a woman dresses or behaves her complaint should be taken seriously. It includes advice that tells companies that they need to check their trainers' backgrounds for violent or sexually based offenses as well as ensuring trainer and trainee are compatible. So we see that contrary to questionable articles I outlined at the beginning of this section WIT appears to be evolving to avoid victim blaming discourses. Yet this training manual is only available to trucking companies. So it appears that WIT is talking about sexual harassment, just not with women drivers.

Desiree Wood, unlike Ellen Voie, is a truck driver. She has clashed with Ellen Voie and WIT ever since her account of sexual harassment was dismissed by members of the WIT online message board. According to Desiree there was an active attempt to silence her comments on the website, usually through deleting her posts. Desiree is also highly critical of WIT's relations with corporate sponsors. Desiree says Ellen Voie is an "ambulance chaser." Desiree accuses Voie of offering corporate sponsorship to motor carriers that are under investigation for sexual harassment and need to improve their image. Ellen and Desiree clashed over the Karen Shank court case where a former driver for CRST was the victim of unwanted advances from her trainer (DeWitte, 2011 ). CRST is a sponsor of Women in Trucking and Desiree accused Ellen of being a "corporate apologist" for CRST. Nevertheless, Schank successfully sued and was awarded damages to the tune of 1.5 million dollars in a California court case against CRST. She alleged that CRST knowingly allowed sexual harassment to continue unabated thus promoting a hostile work environment. This was the first case of its kind in the industry and it shows that people can successfully fight back against sexual harassment in this industry.

As a result of her negative experience with WIT, Desiree Wood started a counter narrative website called Reaching Out, Encouraging others, Achieving personal success, Leadership (REAL) Women in Trucking. Desiree maintains a widely followed Twitter and Facebook persona that focuses on the issues that women face in this industry. REAL Women in Trucking seeks to give a voice to the very real issues that women face in a highly mobile, male dominated, workplace. Wood uses her experience, as well as the experience of other drivers, to help women understand what they are going to face in the industry and gives common sense solutions to problems they may encounter such as learning how to send out an SOS message on Qualcomm or finding out the emergency number for trucking carriers that often gets lost in the paper shuffle during orientation. And she acts as a sounding board for women who have been abused as drivers. REAL Women in Trucking now has weekly conference calls with women drivers and a regular Blog Talk Radio hour. The REAL Women In Trucking website includes a section that addresses motor carrier reputations to warn women about sexual harassment allegations and safety issues in particular companies. A crucial part of Desiree's mission involves the discourse on the supposed driver shortage and the efforts to recruit women. She says that recruiting women without addressing harassment and discrimination in the industry is dangerous.

I spent time laying out the controversy over WIT and Desiree Wood to show how there are attempts to make this a female friendly occupation but there are unique issues like safety in a mobile environment and harassment that are not being examined. Although women rarely report harassment, talking about harassment and creating an environment where women can feel comfortable reporting harassment is one of the most important

tools for dealing with this issue (Ofarrell & Harlan, 1982; Quinn, 2000; Sasson-Levy, 2003).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter reflects the overall argument of this work that trucking is changing because of changes in the US economy that is based on working laborers harder and longer. As a result, this job is not very appealing to many people and the industry is now recruiting from populations that have been ignored previously. One of those groups is women and there is an increased effort to recruit women truck drivers. However, many men question the skills of women drivers as well as the validity of their presence in this workplace. These men make women drivers uncomfortable through harassment and women struggle to legitimize their presence in this workplace.

There are a few key findings based on the experience of women in this industry. The most important, and probably most obvious, is that companies must have clear sexual harassment policies and consequences to protect their workers. Second, resistance is crucial for workers and it helps marginalized workers survive in their workplace as well as protect their dignity and self esteem. Finally, even though women might experience sexual harassment at work, the love of their job can often help them wade through such difficulties. These are the kinds of workers that need to be nurtured in the workplace through clear policies about harassment.

I began this chapter with a quote from Earline that encapsulates women's experience in this industry. Driving a truck and being out on the road has fostered more self-confidence and financial security among the women that I interviewed. Nobody can push them

around anymore. In short, they love their jobs. This job allowed my informants to overcome divorces, find good paying work in an era of deindustrialization, and provide a better life for themselves and their families.

However, their presence in this workplace is highly problematic mainly because this is a male dominated industry. While several men that I spoke with are supportive of women in the industry their reasoning often relies on traditional gender norms like saying women are good with customers, more organized, take better care of their trucks, and do not speed. Also, males say that women can now excel in the industry because trucking is “easier” with power steering and automatic transmissions. Most of these men are surprised to learn that women only represent five percent of this industry and it has been that percentage since at least the 1970’s. There were plenty of women in the 1970’s and 1980’s who drove without power steering, air conditioning, automatic shifters, and even bathrooms.

As such, this is an industry where women can be empowered but also have that empowerment challenged through harassment and violence. Both of these realities are fostered by mobility because a woman must learn to depend on herself out there on the road and face a decentralized workspace where harassment is difficult to police. Instead of ignoring the issue of gendered and sexual harassment in the industry, stakeholders, like motor carriers, need to create clear, enforceable policies to protect their workers and punish those who harass coworkers. The efforts by WIT to educate motor carriers on how to avoid liability for sexual harassment are a step in the right direction. It appears that R.E.A.L Women in Trucking could also accomplish this task by giving women a source

for information and providing them with practical solutions for things they might encounter on the road.

Ultimately, though, change needs to come from women drivers. The longer they participate in policing each other's bodies and behavior the more they divide themselves. This division only makes it easier for the industry to ignore the issue of gender and sexual harassment. Women need to understand what constitutes gender and sexual harassment legally and what they can do to prevent such behavior in this workplace.

Echoing Michael Kimmel's argument regarding homophobia, male drivers need to also speak out against violence and harassment of women in the industry. Kimmel makes a powerful argument that by being silent when minorities are mistreated we are only contributing to the problem. In the end, gendered and sexual-based harassment can be challenged in this industry by creating an environment in which harassment is deemed to be unacceptable both by women and men. I would also argue that companies need to follow the advice of groups like Women in Trucking and R.E.A.L Women in Trucking who have clear solutions for companies that want to avoid the liability of sexual and gendered harassment. In an era in which the industry gives so much lip service to a driver shortage, it would seem that companies would be better served by making women more comfortable in the driver's seat by fostering respect for workers, clear policies, and a safe work environment.

## Chapter 7: Sexuality

”Too bad undisciplined drivers are so willing to take risks that they jeopardize safety for all of us.”

Overdrive Staff , 2002

“Most truckers and their loved ones responded to my queries with disgust and repulsion.”

Overdrive Staff, 2002

“Male truckers also have contact with men who are interested in a sexual liaison”

Ouellet, 1994

The first two quotes came from a 2002 feature edition in *Overdrive* magazine on prostitution and the trucking industry. The first was written by a driver in reference to supposed dangerous sex workers that might seek to rob and murder a driver. The second came from a reporter that interviewed drivers about sex workers at truck stops. Both quotes echo a common sentiment whenever someone seeks to discuss issues involving sexuality in the trucking industry: This only applies to the worst kind of truck driver. The third was written by Lawrence Ouellet in *Pedal to the Metal*, a 1994 book about the trucking industry. Ouellet includes a brief passage about gay men approaching truck drivers for sex and acknowledges that there is some same sex activity on the road. However, Ouellet really does not expand his analysis to seriously consider the presence and contributions of gay truck drivers and he completely leaves out the experience of lesbian truck drivers. All three quotes work to marginalize various forms of sexuality that are actually very much a part this industry.

In this chapter, I argue that one of the major changes in modern trucking is the fact that people are actually talking about sexuality in the industry rather than dismissing it as the above quotes attempt to do. A lot of this stems from the effort to recruit individuals from

underrepresented populations, such as the LGBT community, in order to cope with the supposed driver shortage. Schneider International advertises on OutQ radio, a station devoted to the LGBT community on Sirius XM satellite radio. Also, there is a non-profit group, the Gay Truckers Association that helps connect gay drivers with each other for support and camaraderie. At the same time, many stakeholders are confronting the issues involving prostitution and sex trafficking in the industry, namely the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Christian organizations such as Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT), the Defenders, and All Things New.

I further argue that this workplace is a site for a variety of sexualized norms including both straight and gay/lesbian workers. A fuller picture of workplace sexuality will come out of a close examination of the sexualized spaces within the trucking industry. With the exception of Kitiarsa (2008) and Nyanzi et al (2004) the literature on sexuality in the workplace typically involves relations between stationary co-workers. The literature is silent regarding sexuality that develops around mobile, working class populations. So this research seeks to address this silence by examining how trucking produces sexualized workers and how those workers navigate the industry. First, I show that drivers experience romance and lust while they are out on the road and sometimes they do that with other drivers. Second, even though Lawrence Ouelett leaves out gays and lesbians, there is a subculture of gay drivers and their experiences challenges research that says working class workplaces are homophobic. Third, this chapter examines another sexual subculture that revolves around female sex workers and the dangers they face with truck driver clients that are directly related to the mobility of this industry. Finally, I examine



how this industry is so sexualized that entire non profits are centered on the mobile sexuality and decentralization of the trucking industry.

### **Mapping Sexuality**

Sexuality is an inherently spatial experience and it often determines what we can and cannot do in space and more specifically whether we are comfortable in that space (Browne, Lim, & Brown, 2007; Oswin, 2008; Panelli, 2004). Furthermore there are discursive and regulatory practices which reward certain types of sexuality and penalize others, usually homosexuality but also non-procreative sex (Cantungal & McCann, 2010; Gorman-Murray, Waitt, & Johnston, 2008; Hubbard, 2002; Nast, 1998; Panelli, 2004) and these are enforced by the state and media (Cantungal & McCann, 2010; Gorman-Murray et al., 2008; Hubbard, 2002). In most cases, appropriate expressions of sexuality are broken down into notions of public and private (Browne et al., 2007; Hubbard, 2002).. This spatialized heteronormativity is made obvious by the fact that, with rare exception, public affection between same sex couples is cause for alarm and even retaliation through violence.

Sexual geographies are a relatively recent addition to the discipline. Initial forays into this topic dealt with mapping spaces of gay life and the ways in which gay men have been able to create communities in major metropolitan areas as well at their role in gentrification of urban spaces (Bell & Valentine, 1995a; Binnie & Valentine, 1999). At the same time, these scholars have argued that women, who tend to be more economically vulnerable, have not been able to claim lesbian spaces at the same rate in

which gay men have been able to create such spaces for themselves (Bell & Valentine, 1995a; Oswin, 2008; Panelli, 2004). While many scholars have focused their energies on urban sexuality, there is a growing interest in how sexuality plays out in rural spaces (Bell & Valentine, 1995b).

More recently, geographers have been examining the use of queer theory in order to understand how space is sexualized and more specifically heteronormative. Geographies of sexualities tend to view the topic through identity politics where there are clear delineations between gay and straight; man and woman etc. However queer theory works to shake up those binaries and the ways in which they are implicated in heteronormativity. As Kath Brown (2006) explains queer is about the ‘fluidity’ (885) of identity where scholars “question normativities and orthodoxies” (886). Oswin (2008) further adds that queer should also force us to be thinking about the intersections of queer with other identities such as race or class. As she argues “Queering our analysis thus helps us to position sexuality within multifaceted constellations of power’ (2008: 100).

### **Sexuality at Work**

Sexual harassment is usually one of the most common ways in which sexuality in the workplace gets talked about. In the modern place, sexuality is not supposed to matter and it is considered harmful to the workplace (Pringle, 1989; Christine Williams et al., 1999). Most modern workplaces contain clear policies that police sexuality in the workplace. The centralized nature of such workplaces makes it possible to enforce those rules. However, researchers have demonstrated sexuality is a part of the workplace and point to

the high numbers of relationships that develop in the office as evidence (Christine Williams et al., 1999).

According to Williams et al (1999) a lot of our knowledge about the workplace and sexuality usually focuses on straight individuals. Scholars have also argued that the work place is heterosexist (Bell & Valentine, 1995a; Nast, 1998). As such, most workplaces only make certain performances of sexuality visible and in many cases gay and lesbian workers must go along with that sexualized script, this is especially true in highly masculinized industries (Ward & Winstanley, 2006). Heterosexism is maintained through a lot of the same blue humor and banter that Linda McDowell (1994) found in London's financial sector. Sometimes it is argued that LGBT individuals give a bad reputation for the company or that they are deceptive and cannot be trusted (Embrick, Walther, & Wickens, 2007; Knopp, 1997; McCreery, 2002). In hypermasculine environments, the men view themselves as real men and see gay men as a threat to the work environment (Embrick et al., 2007).

In general, there is a lacuna in geographic literature that deals specifically with sexuality in the workplace with some notable exceptions (Crang, 1994; Elder, 1995; Kitiarsa, 2008; Knopp, 1997; McDowell, 1995). Much of the academic work about sex in the workplace actually comes from sociology. So this project will engage with that work within geography and sociology but at the same time this research seeks to ameliorate the lack of conceptual work on sexuality in the workplace within geography.

## **Class and Sexuality**

The literature on class and sexuality argues that working class individuals tend to be more homophobic than their better educated, more wealthy counterparts (M. Brown, Knopp, & Morill, 2005; Embrick et al., 2007) and they carry that with them into the workplace (Embrick et al., 2007). They view themselves as real men and see gay men as a threat to the work environment (Embrick et al., 2007). They shore up that masculinity through homophobic banter and joking.

Life on the road has fostered queer possibilities in which varying sexual identities and class positioning are encountered. Some scholars have argued that the gay and lesbian community is middle class, consumer oriented and that it is difficult for working class gays and lesbians to keep up with that trend both in dress and lifestyle (Casey, 2009; Taylor, 2006, 2007). Casey (2009) argued that mobility has allowed middle class gay men to experience a “sexual liberation” (Casey, 159) by allowing them to travel to other gay spaces throughout the world (Walton-Roberts & Pratt, 2005). However, working class gay men do not have those same opportunities for liberating travel because they do not make as much money as middle class men.

Bodies reflect class (Gaetano, 2008; Taylor, 2006, 2007) and working class bodies are often contrasted with the more effeminate middle class working in office scenarios (Cowen, 2004; Embrick et al., 2007). Historically, working class sexuality has been seen as problematic (Freedman & Emilio, 1990) for various reasons including having too many children and the reality of survival prostitution.

In recent years there has been an increased interest within geography about the spaces of sex work. More specifically, scholars focus on how the law excludes street level sex workers as full citizens by excluding them from public spaces and not enforcing existing laws for sexual assault and violence (England, 2008; Penfold, Hunter, Campbell, & Barham, 2004; Sanchez, 2004; Sanders & Campbell, 2007). The bodies of prostitutes are soiled and dirty because they are typically found in the marginalized parts of town and because they are engaging in sexual behavior that is viewed as inappropriate for women (Hubbard, 1998; Pratt, 2005). Meanwhile their clients are able to move in and out of these spaces without being tainted by these spaces as the workers are (Hart, 1995). Female sex workers are also believed to bring sexually transmitted diseases and trash such as used condoms, noise, and traffic jams (Hubbard, Matthews, & Scoular, 2008). Their presence is bad for business and gentrifying neighborhoods (Hart, 1995; Hubbard, 2004; Pratt, 2005).

### **Sex and the Truck Driver**

As Williams et al argued, sexual relationships in the workplace are common (Christine Williams et al., 1999). So it should be no surprise that romance and lust are also a part of the workplace for truck drivers. At the most basic, drivers marry and have long term relationships with other drivers. Ten out of twenty nine drivers interviewed were currently driving with or formerly drove with their partners. Two actually met in trucking school. One was currently dating a driver.<sup>37</sup> Some drivers, like Michelle and Tonya, said

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<sup>37</sup> Most of the couples saw team driving as a positive experience although one woman was the victim of physical violence while team driving with a boyfriend. Buck described teaming with his romantic partner as “heaven and hell” because they were in a space “the size of a shower stall” where you cannot get away from each other if you get into an argument. The everyday stresses of long haul driving also complicated

they would never date another driver. According to Tonya, being “out there” presents numerous opportunities for infidelity. Tonya said she specifically avoids dating other drivers because she thinks it is too “loose out there.”<sup>38</sup> She thinks men are indiscriminate due to the anonymity of being on the road which leads them to be deceptive. As she explained,

“[Men] were... in the mentality of wanting to play around out there... That’s what I find nine times out of ten they just wanna play around, jump from truck to truck or woman to woman. It’s so easy... These guys are away from home so he says “No I’m not married” and I see you’ve got a wife and 10 other women on the side. (laughs) I’d just as soon be left alone. Peace of mind.”

As this quote demonstrates, Tonya thinks these men cannot be trusted because their mobility gives them access to women and casual sex.

On the other hand her aloneness, which stems from her mobility, causes her to get lonely and tempted but she is “old school” and does not want to face the “repercussions” of sex on the road, meaning diseases and heartache. Tonya is not alone in her struggle against loneliness and desire. A truck stop chaplain mentioned that while men often come in to talk about their issues with sexuality on the road, women also come to him to talk about their lustful temptations on the road. So both men and women struggle with sexuality on the road. It also needs to be pointed out that in Tonya’s account, we see that she blames

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the relationship with his partner and co-driver. On the other hand, team driving meant that there was always “...somebody to share [the] sunset with.”

<sup>38</sup> Tonya did date one driver which reinforced her resolve to not date drivers. She checked into his background and sure enough she found him to be someone who was a ladies’ man and not really available for a committed relationship.

the “looseness” of the road on men who are away from home. You are anonymous on the road and only home can restrain debauchery.

However, not everybody sees unfettered sexuality on the road to be a problem. In Harold and Brandon’s case they could not wait to get out on the road to experience the sexual offerings available to them and they claimed that they made a “damned fortune” selling erotica and videos based on their sexual exploits while on the road.

It is apparent that the mobility and the decentralization of this industry lends itself to what Tonya calls a “sexual aura.” On one hand you have drivers that are partnered with or dating other drivers. On the other you have drivers who believe the hypermobility of this industry and the anonymity lead drivers to cheat and are thus unsuitable for dating. However, other drivers, like Harold and Brandon, use their time on the road to explore their sexuality. In the next section, I discuss LGBT drivers like Harold and Brandon in the industry as well as the “truck chasing” subculture.

### **Gay and on the Road**

As some of the literature argues, blue collar workplaces are homophobic (M. Brown et al., 2005; Embrick et al., 2007) and LGBT persons are marginalized and even threatened with violence (K. Anderson & Gold, 1996). Furthermore, the labor movement took a while to acknowledge that LGBT issues were a part of the labor struggle (Krupat, 2002). However, in my talks with truck drivers I found that the mobility and decentralization of this industry fosters a subculture of LGBT drivers that, although homophobia is still present in varying forms, is not as homophobic as the literature would have us believe.

A lot of drivers bemoan being away from home but several of my same-sex- loving informants have been able to live full lives, build support networks with other gay drivers and even develop partnerships on the road. And their friendships were built out of a love for trucking. Chris lives in a town with very few gay people. He usually has to drive 100 miles to be in a gay friendly city. He found that being on the road was less lonely for him than being at home because he was able to meet new gay friends. His friends would meet up, go to dinner and go out on the town. They also hosted each other in their homes.

“I’ve met some really neat friends that are almost family to me because of trucking. When I lived on the road it was a lot stronger social relationships type thing and I even ended up with a relationship in one case. So in some ways it can be lonely running down the road out for a month at a time but in my case there’s nobody at home.”

This quote from Chris demonstrates that this supposedly homophobic industry is actually a place where people in the LGBT community can be comfortable and build a network of support and companionship. In my talk with Chris, I found that because of this network he was much less lonely than other drivers that I talked with. All of Chris’s “family” is connected to trucking. His happiness on the road stems directly from his mobility because it allowed him to meet people he probably would never have met otherwise. The decentralized nature of this workplace also means that drivers, like Chris, make friends outside of their actual companies.

While there is a tendency for those, like Ouellett, to overlook the work of gays and lesbians in the industry, sometimes this oversight is not intentional or meant to harm anybody. Some drivers are just not aware that gay drivers were out there on the road as well. Buck says that at times he would be running down the road with a group of gays



and lesbians talking on the CB. Sometimes they would be “discovered” by a driver who was just switching channels to find someone more interesting to talk to. These drivers were pleasantly surprised to find people like Buck out on the road.

“[Straight drivers] would find us and then they’d be all into the fact that there was something interesting where people weren’t talking about engine size or how many cops stories they had. They were talking about other things. I actually remember drivers getting on the radio ‘Oh my god I’d never even knew there were gay drivers out here. You guys are really great. The way you care for each other. I’d much rather run with you any old day than some person that is all bitter and pissed off and want to run their company down.’ ”

Again, this is in direct contrast to the claim that blue collar spaces are necessarily homophobic. Clearly, this group of LGBT persons found a friendly place to enjoy each other’s company. When they are discovered by other drivers, there is no CB harassment. In fact, these drivers see their presence as a good thing. In my interviews I had several drivers bemoan the fact that a lot of drivers will not talk about anything except trucks, trucking, and why they hate trucking. So it is understandable that some drivers would be intrigued by meeting these new people that were hitherto thought to not exist. It begs the question of why are these drivers surprised to know there are gay drivers out on the road? It is possible that many drivers are unaware of the multiple gender expressions found within the gay and lesbian community and they are thus relying on the stereotype of the effeminate gay man as an indicator of “gayness”.

When asked about whether people in the industry were homophobic Harold and Brandon claimed that they did not have any problems or harassment even after having a gay sticker on their truck. An example they gave involved getting a shower at a truck stop. Earlier in their relationship they would shower together when they were on the road. In

one instance when one of their numbers was called to get a shower they told the woman at the counter to give them two towels and just needed one shower. She questioned the fact they were going in together to which another driver responded “Don’t ask questions. Just give them the towels.” So at the very least, there are drivers out there who think what two men do together is not their business.

Buck and Cynthia found that many drivers just did not care about their sexuality. Buck said that people were more concerned with the fact that he was a good, responsible driver. According to Buck, he and his partner were a respected team and people referred to them affectionately as “The Boys.” Cynthia was open with people when they asked if she was married. She usually responded by saying “I might as well be” and then she would explain she had a girlfriend. She said nobody ever seemed to care and for the most part it never even came up in conversation.

In Harold’s case, he bristled at the notion that being a gay driver mattered.

“I get all the time on my message board, ‘What’s the best gay friendly company?’ They’re all gay friendly. Why are you going to make it an issue that you’re gay? Go in there do the job. They’re hiring truck drivers. They want to hire you and they want to make sure that you have a good driving record. Just because you’re gay they’re not going to treat you any different.”

However, I did find evidence of some homophobia. Buck had a different answer when I asked if the industry was gay friendly. He says trucking companies are only interested in filling the driver seat so they will hire someone as long as they are a “warm body” and will to put up with the drudgeries of delivering and picking up loads every day. He found that his dispatcher did not care about his orientation because he was a good driver but the minute he was not able to get a load delivered on time the dispatcher became his “worst

nightmare.” Suddenly he was out of favor and it becomes proof that it was a mistake to hire a gay driver. At one point, a dispatcher started sending him checks that combined Mrs. with his first name and then the last name of his partner.

Also, according to Chris, there is still harassment and fear out there on the road. He says that it is risky to display gay pride stickers because someone might damage your truck. Even if someone gives a signal that they are “family” a lot of people will not respond because they are scared of retaliation. Chris said that in reality that is really sad because this person is out there “scared to death that something’s going to happen to them”. He added,

”It’s one thing to stand up and scream and yell when you’re in a parade but it’s a whole lot harder to do when you’re out here on the road by yourself”.

So we see some nuance to the issue of being a gay driver with this quote. The mobility of this industry makes it so that Chris has found a family out on the road. However, by bringing up the parade trope he underscores that fact that people are often alone and on their own in this industry thus making it difficult to be out and proud.

In the trucking industry the CB is a major area of homophobic taunts because of its anonymity. Ignoring the CB homophobia was usually how most gay identified drivers dealt with this. But some drivers, like Harold, talk back to gay bashing on the CB. In one instance, a driver tried to use the Bible to admonish homosexuals and Harold corrected him.

“...I said ‘Driver if you’re going to preach get the shit straight.’ ‘Well you must be a faggot lover too.’ I said “God said love everybody. So if you’re so big and mighty you’d know this.’

When I asked Chris how he dealt with homophobia on the CB he admitted that he was sometimes hurt by what he hears on the CB but, like Harold, he responded to the bashers by sounding like he was one of them.

“It’s usually try sounding like them and saying 'hey don't you have something better to do?' or 'that's really professional'. Try to force them to see themselves and what they're doing...A lot of times I'll tell them 'you're talking to someone you can't even see on the other line. One of these days you're going to be talking to someone like that and you're going to be talking to your own son or nephew or father.”

In both of these cases, neither Harold nor Chris admits that he is gay. However, they confront this homophobia by talking on the level of the person on the other end of the mike. As a result of his personal experience as a Southern Baptist, Harold discredited the other driver by undermining his Bible knowledge. Chris was able to confront CB homophobia by questioning the driver’s professionalism and personalizing the homophobia by appealing to his sense of family.

I also found homophobia in my interviews with straight drivers. When I asked Bill about gay drivers he admitted he was enraged by men who have approached him for sex.

“I don’t care what you do. I don’t want to see it... I don’t want to see you with your man. Makes me feel uncomfortable ... which it’s not my right to be comfortable... [if] you’re a faggot and I say “faggot” don’t tell me you’re offended because it’s just a word, you know?”

Bill is conflicted in his feelings about gay men in his workplace. He acknowledges that he is uncomfortable about the presence of gay men especially if they display their “gayness” in public. At that point he has to confront the fact that gay men are in his

workplace. However, he actually questions straight privilege at the same time by saying that he realizes that there is something obviously unfair about telling people how to behave in public because he might be uncomfortable. Also, by saying “faggot” is “just a word” and they should not be offended, Bill is actually admitting that there *is* something wrong with calling people this epithet. Bill’s account shows that homophobia in this workplace is more complicated than outright dismissal of those who are gay identified.

I also had a respondent, Judith, who told me that she taunted a buddy with links to gay trucker porn sites as a joke and discussed how gay men in the industry are dangerous and irresponsible.

“...And I told him, you know this makes no sense that you would hire these people when it’s obvious that their intent is to go out and prostitute themselves in a truck stop because you’re going to lose a load and driver because you’re going to find them dead behind a trailer somewhere..”

Judith is basically being one of the guys with her homophobic pranks. Her driver friends are all men. As Embrik et al (2007) explained, homophobic banter and pranks are how men shore up their masculinity in the workplace. It is clear, though, that Judith sees same sex attraction to be funny and dangerous at the same time. But she is also acknowledging that gayness is something that *is* a part of trucking. Not only does she know there is a subset of porn featuring truck drivers, she acknowledged her company is hiring gay men. Judith went on to say that her company was hiring just anybody, like felons and gay men, so that they have enough trucks out on the road. She sees the presence of gay men as a negative feature of her workplace. Gay men cannot be trusted to do their job because they are consumed with sexual exploits, which is a prevalent stereotype of gay men.

As these accounts demonstrate, the issue of gays and lesbians in the trucking industry is complicated. Contrary to the literature, trucking is not a homophobic workplace per se. There is a gay subculture that is fueled by mobility where drivers can meet other gay drivers. There are gays and lesbians who have not faced a lot of homophobia or they have been able to brush it off when they have. Sometimes gay men and lesbians can even “pass” because they do not meet the gendered stereotypes that drivers might have about being gay or lesbian. Yet, we cannot say this workplace is totally devoid of homophobia. It is important to recognize there are still drivers out there who are scared of people finding out they are gay because they are afraid of being attacked.

### **Truck Chasers**

So we see how sexuality is an omnipresent reality within trucking for both gay and straight drivers and this is fostered by mobility. Sexuality comes in the form of romance, lust, and identity. This section demonstrates that mobility has allowed many men to engage in same sex relations while they are out on the road and these interactions included both gay and straight identified men. Their activities are often anonymous which is fostered through a decentralized occupation where the boss is *usually* not looking over their shoulders as long as they pick up and deliver their loads on time. However a key point to these findings is that truck chasing is inherently about class struggle in the gay community.

Scholars have argued that working class gays and lesbians are marginalized in the gay community (Casey, 2009; Taylor, 2006, 2007). Historically, working class sexuality has been seen as problematic (Freedman & Emilio, 1990) for various reasons including a

supposed hypermasculinity that is often read off the bodies of working class men (Cowen, 2004; Embrick et al., 2007; Gaetano, 2008; Taylor, 2006, 2007). Mobility allows gay men to meet other men for various activities (Walton-Roberts & Pratt, 2005). The 'truck chaser' community exemplifies these points. Truck chasers are gay, bisexual, or even straight men looking for sexual relations with truck drivers. The truck chasers are usually middle class and they are looking for working class/ blue collar bodies that they feel are the ultimate in masculinity.

Truck chasers' desires for truck drivers rely on stereotypical notions of working class men who are assumed to be oversexed, dirty, hypermasculine, and uneducated. A brief glance at trucker erotica will help identify how truck chasers imagine trucking bodies. In Johnny Hansen's *Truckers: True Gay Erotica* truck drivers wear flannel shirts and jeans; sometimes they have torn the sleeves off. They are hairy and have beards. He is "the Marlboro man on wheels" (Hansen, 76). He is muscular; his arms "bulge" (Hansen, 67, 92) and they are like "tree trunks" (Hansen, 101). He is "sweat sheened" (Hansen, 101). He's "rough" and might be into kink. Usually they are white. And they are potentially dangerous (and perhaps that makes them even sexier) because they are dressed like straight, blue collar guys who are often assumed to be homophobes. Who is to say they are not potential gay bashers? These are the exact stereotypes that play out in the fantasies of the truck chaser community.

How do truck chasers meet truck drivers? Sometimes they are aware of cruising spots where truck drivers are available. However, respondents Harold and Brandon publish a monthly personals magazine where both chasers and truckers can communicate with each other. They also publish a quarterly cruising guide that gives tips on various places to

hook up with truck drivers. Although it is no longer available, Harold and Brandon ran a website that included trucker porn and message boards.

While reading through several copies of the *Gay Trucker Classifieds* I found a marked difference between the ads that were placed by chasers and truckers. While most of these ads are targeted towards truck drivers, several ads specify they are interested in blue collar guys in general which included construction workers, cops, military types, firemen, bikers, tradesmen, and general laborers (September 2008, page 13,15,31) which appears to validate Buck's argument that this is about inter-class sexuality. A lot of the ads use some of the same tropes of truck drivers that were found within the trucking erotica- hairy, masculine dirty, and sweaty. Or as Harold put it these men want "The very masculine, hairy, masculine- you don't really want a queen- you want a man". So it is obvious that gender presentation play an important role in these encounters.

The ads by truck chasers vastly outnumber driver ads which Harold and Brandon had mentioned during their interview<sup>39</sup>. Part of the reason why there may be fewer drivers is because, as Harold and Brandon argue, "...it's so easy to sit back and be cruised." So, in general, the driver does not have to go through a lot of effort to find a partner.

Buck, who has been cruised by truck chasers, mentioned that these encounters treated drivers like a fetish rather than human beings. He based these feelings on the fact that truck chasers would proposition him for explicit paraphilias such as pig play and he argued that it stemmed from the classist assumptions of middle class gays about working class men.

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<sup>39</sup> I found that for September 2007 there were 109 chaser ads compared with 18 driver ads. Similarly, in June 2008 there were 103 chaser ads and 17 driver ads.



The vast majority of chasers were not advertising for long term relationships although a few drivers did advertise for long term relationships. So at the very least, the chasing population does not see truck drivers as relationship material<sup>40</sup>. Chasers also asked for far more extreme activities that included requests to be abused, degraded, and humiliated. There is an inherent risk that pointing out these patterns and writing about them will marginalize already stigmatized sexual minorities such as those who are interested in paraphilia. Of course not all truck drivers engage in these activities and not all gay men or even truck chasers want to participate in these kinds of activities. There were plenty of individuals- both chasers and drivers- that were just asking for more normalized, adult consenting, sex. But I argue that Buck is right. It is no accident these kinds of requests are asked of this particular group.

The sexual spaces that surround trucking truly shake up heteronormative binaries. The *Gay Truckers Classifieds* have several listings where chasers mention in their ads that people interested could not call during certain hours because they did not want their wives to find out. There were transgendered individuals as well as cross dressers. There were also ads from heterosexual and married couples looking for drivers to do threesomes. According to one story a guy brought his ‘hot BBW<sup>41</sup>’ friend to enjoy a glory hole with him. So this is a scenario that makes it rather difficult to understand through traditional sexual norms.

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<sup>40</sup> The activities drivers requested in their ads are dramatically different from chasers. In September 2007, 7 out of 8 drivers were advertising for long term relationships or co-drivers. In June 2008, 8 out of 17 drivers sought a long term relationships or co-drivers. However, in September, while a few chasers offered a place to stay and a hot meal, and 1 wanted to cuddle and kiss, only 1 out of 109 chasers specified they wanted anything long term. In June 08 3 out of 103 chasers were looking for a relationship.

<sup>41</sup> BBW is an acronym for Big Beautiful Women

*The Cruiser's Club Cruising Guide* serves as a way for drivers and chasers to find each other. Each season the *Cruising Guide* comes out with information about places throughout the US which have public spaces (glory holes, adult bookstores, rest areas, and stores) in which chasers can find drivers and vice versa. Drivers and chasers snail mail and email these tips to Harold and Brandon. The tips specify the locations and facilities that are available and what kind of populations they should expect to find in these areas<sup>42</sup>. They give explicit directions, seasonal variations (ie: not in the woods during winter) and who is cruising which often includes racialized categories such as 'blue collar Hispanics' (May/June 2008 page 3). It also serves to warn participants of police surveillance, crack downs, and even the presence of cameras in the facilities which are increasingly common.

Harold and Brandon emphasized that they publish the *Cruising Guides* not just to tell people where they can hook up but also to help them cruise *safely*<sup>43</sup>. Some men have been killed while cruising. Harold stresses that it is a bad idea for chasers to cruise when they are intoxicated or are too "overbearing" by banging on truckers' doors. So those dangers include "fruitloops" but also police surveillance for which Harold had a surprisingly levelheaded attitude. Harold thinks that law enforcement is interested not just in busting people for sex but also to protect people from getting hurt.

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<sup>42</sup> The classifieds also sometimes include reviews of various gay venues. My personal favorite review by a driver about a gay men's health club reads "This is the place to stop before it gets taken over by twinks and the jaded gay male traveler"(September 2007, page 19). Apparently, blue collar spaces within the gay community are fleeting and endangered.

<sup>43</sup> Harold and Brandon sell several items, like shirts, ball caps, and stickers with their logo on the product with the intent of making it easier for members to find each other.

So Harold and Brandon are essentially making it easier and safer to have sex in public. And in the case of the truck drivers, they are helping people have sex at work. However, they are making money by setting out the boundaries of cruising i.e. do it here, do not do it here. Then they are making money through perpetuating the image of the truck driver fetish through their videos, the erotica in the *Classifieds*, and at the time of the interview- their website. So the system feeds itself.

However, other drivers I talked to expressed frustration with truck chasing because they perceive it to be out of control and in an often repeated phrase in trucking ‘They make us all look bad...’ As Chris explains,

“It’s gotten so bad in some places [that] it [is] a nuisance. You’re making us all look bad [with] oral sex right in the front seat or standing outside having oral sex.”

So this is a situation of contested space. Where can drivers engage in sex and where can they not? And more specifically, what can they do in those spaces once they are there? This study’s focus on gay identified informants should not overshadow the fact that a lot of drivers resent chasers and resent drivers who engage in sex with them. Harold’s response would be that these drivers have been cruised by too many ‘pretentious queens’ who should not be so persistent. They also argue that the out of control “queens” will just get fun spots shut down (September 2007, 33). So it is the effeminate gay men that ruin the fun for the more masculine cruisers and drivers.

Just as we will see in the next section on prostitution in the industry, many drivers are in denial about the pervasive sexuality in their workplace. They are particularly unwilling to

acknowledge that truck chasers are often successful in catching what they are chasing. As Harold argues,

:“...If truck drivers weren't giving it up so to speak there would be no cruisers there hawking them. You...hear it on the radio all the time. 'You get these goddamn faggots out of the rest area..' 'Driver if you wouldn't give it up they wouldn't be here. They're here for a reason.' Just like a drug dealer. Why's the drug dealer down on First and Main? Because that's where he's making his money. That's where he's getting his goodies.”

Truth be told according to men who have been involved with these individuals, the majority of the drivers engaging in activities out on the road are straight and often married. The next three quotes astutely echo Humphries (Humphries, 1975) and Foucault (Foucault, 1990) by observing that there is a lot of gray area when it comes to human sexuality. I asked Chris if he had liaisons with married men out on the road. As the quote below shows, he has.

“I'm guilty to have played with a couple of them... It's very common. Most of them are straight men who are very secure in themselves. Your body doesn't know what's gay. Your body just knows what feels good and what doesn't. Only your mind knows what's gay. And there are straight men who know that certain things pleasure them that they can't get at home.”

According to Buck, sometimes those men are closeted and they are “trapped” with a wife and in denial about their sexual orientation.

“You'd meet these married guys that were just so...real and present with you when you were out there but you could never...as much as they even wanted to..they'd already gotten trapped into being married and he had kids and he had responsibilities and he had social pressure. And so when you're on the road and you're having that interaction and you're thinking 'Wow this could really be something.' it never could because most times they didn't have the courage to deal with their sexual orientation.”

And sometimes this contact is better than cheating on your wife according to Harold

“...a lot of them think...I’m getting off with another guy. It would be like getting off by myself and not with a woman. I’m not cheating. I’m not falling in love.”.

There are clear differences between Buck, Chris, Harold, and Brandon. Chris is “guilty” but he is okay with the grey areas that are so apparent in these kinds of interactions.

Harold and Brandon are also okay with this grey area. They are having fun with these men. However, Buck sees these men as deceptive. These guys are not being truthful about their orientation because they are “trapped” in a marriage.

These quotes give us three different variations on the same sex behavior featured in truck chasing. There is the confident man who is comfortable with his sexuality. Then there is the man who is lying about his “real” orientation. Finally, there is the faithful husband who just wants to have sexual contact without endangering his relationship back home. So these accounts allow us to see the complexities of the relatively silent partners in the cruising guides: the truck drivers. These also help us to move past the fetishism and crude stereotypes featured in trucking erotica and cruising guides.

The truck chasing community is another example of how this mobile and decentralized industry is highly sexualized. In fact, it is so sexualized that two of my respondents have made a considerable amount of money through pornography featuring truck drivers, including their own exploits on the road. They have also published very successful guides to help drivers and truck chasers find each other. So this highlights queer possibilities within trucking because these encounters are not limited to gay men. As Harold and Brandon’s personal ads demonstrate, there is a hodgepodge of sexual identities that

includes gay men, straight men, bisexual men, men in denial about their sexuality, old men, married heterosexual couples, and zaftig women. There are also a multitude of reasons why truck drivers might engage in sex with chasers and other drivers. They may get something they are not getting at home or they may be able to engage in a sexuality that is not possible at home. Yet the stereotypes about blue collar bodies that underpin the truck chasers' desires add some evidence that working class men are marginalized and objectified in the gay community.

### **Lot Lizards**

Sex workers at truck stops are called Lot Lizards in CB lingo and they show up at truck stops because there is a demand for their services. Prostitution is omnipresent in the trucking industry which is further evidence that this is a sexually charged workplace. As I will show, the transience of drivers and extensive time on the road creates a scenario where drivers might be lonely or wanting to engage in something they cannot do at home. Sex workers fill these needs for drivers yet they are treated with disdain. This subculture exists because of the loneliness of mobility and the decentralized, anonymous nature of the industry. People consort with prostitutes because nobody is watching.

Women sex workers advertise as 'commercial company' on a channel over the citizens band radio and then go to another channel to wait for clients and plan to meet up. In many cases they will also go knocking on the doors of trucks in order to solicit. Drivers resent being woken up or bothered by solicitation and they have developed tactics to avoid this. These tactics include stickers that say 'no lot lizards', not answering the door, hanging bras and panties from the driver side mirrors to signal there is already a woman

in the truck, placing a Bible where it can be seen, and only parking at the front of the truck stop where it is well lit and more likely to be patrolled by security and employees at the truck stop.<sup>44</sup> A lot of drivers avoid truck stops known to harbor prostitution; word gets around about which truck stops to avoid.

As Teela Sanders found in her research about protests against sex workers in the UK, people who use the services of prostitutes often deny that fact (Sanders, 2004). Similarly, drivers deny using the services of lot lizards. The rhetoric surrounding this person's presence is a mixture of derision about her bodily appearance and fear. Lot lizards are said to be unattractive, drug addicted, old, fat, dirty, and diseased. During my research I have seen a particular phrase repeated about lot lizards and that is 'she looks half dead' or 'they act like the living dead.'<sup>45</sup> She is also accused of being a gateway for drug trafficking and theft. The fear stems from the possibility that this woman, or her pimp, might get violent and rob the driver or damage his truck. So sex workers are supposed to bring danger to the truck stop.

However, some drivers are not as critical of sex workers and even defend these women by saying they are just trying to make a living (Cox, 2008). A woman working at a Nevada brothel said that when she uses the CB to contact drivers, sometimes people will

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<sup>44</sup> Other approaches included giving out Bible pamphlets, telling them he has an STI, or yelling obscenities. Bill described one instance where a woman jumped up on his door and he took off driving with her hanging onto the door until she finally jumped off.

<sup>45</sup> This may have been the inspiration for Ray Garton's (2004) book entitled *Lot Lizards*. *Lot Lizards* features a gang of vampire lot lizards who travel the nation's truck stops looking for unknowing, truck driving victims.

say hateful things to her. However, she said some men will respond and tell drivers to leave her alone so she can do her job (Duncan, 2002).<sup>46</sup>

Geographic literature on sex work involves urban areas but there are some similarities between the urban scenario and the truck stops particularly with the issue of zoning prostitutes in and out of urban spaces (England, 2008; Penfold et al., 2004; Sanchez, 2004; Sanders & Campbell, 2007). In an effort to appease drivers who complain about the presence of prostitutes, some truck stops install more lighting, hire security, and build fences around the property in an effort to ward off the Lot Lizards. Yet, the practice continues as women find holes in the fence or relocate to cheap motels around the truck stops. Also, these efforts at beefing up security fail to acknowledge that some of these women get into gated truck stops by riding with a truck driver. In a sense, truck stops are always trying to hit a moving target that appears to adapt to the restraints of zoning prostitution. However, there is always the possibility of corruption where truck stops may receive some sort of kickback for turning a blind eye to illegal activities on their properties.

So there is a demand for sex workers at the truck stop although most drivers deny their role in these activities. They make fun of sex workers in an effort to deflect any guilt and to further objectify them. Yet the mobility of both drivers and sex workers continues to foster this subculture of trucking life. In the next section, I look at the fact that the truck stop is just as dangerous for sex workers as it is for truck drivers.

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<sup>46</sup> This same woman found a kinship with drivers who are often away from their families for long periods of time, doing a job that is hard on the body, and the drudgery of everyday workplaces. And these two populations face stereotypes that are very similar.



## **Getting Rid of Lot Lizards**

Drivers and others within the industry frequently blame prostitutes for potential dangers at the truck stops. Media exposes on prostitution and trucking play into a spatial stigma where "...an unseen world-seamy and sometimes deadly- thrives inside the trucks and over crackling citizens band radio here and in truck stops across the nation"(Tinsley, 2004). However, the truck stop becomes a site of danger not just for the drivers but also for the women working the truck stops. This danger is exacerbated by the mobility and decentralization of this workplace. Drivers can pick up prostitutes and take them anywhere. Since nobody is likely to be watching what a driver does in his free time, drivers can kidnap sex workers, dispose of their bodies, and get away with it.

Sex workers at truck stops face many of the same dangers as the street level prostitute and possibly more due to the mobility and transience of that space. The 'living dead' look used to describe sex workers at truck stops is the result of women who are dealing with poverty and a workplace infused with violence, objectification, drug addiction, and a lifetime of abuse. Like other sex workers, these women are frequently criminalized and arrested for solicitation.

I conducted short interviews with the street level working women who had truck drivers as clients. At first, most of the women vehemently denied having truck drivers as clients. They cited the danger of getting into trucks and the horror stories they have heard from other women. During my last visit, there was a semi driver listed on the Bad Trick List<sup>47</sup>. The list warned women that this driver physically assaulted a woman, anally raped her,

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<sup>47</sup> This is a pamphlet given out to street level sex workers to warn them of dangerous customers.

and tried to use handcuffs. However, further into the conversation it turns out most of these women had trucker clients who were nice to them. Some of them even saw these men as friends and occasionally boyfriends in their private lives.<sup>48</sup> It appears that the initial denial of having trucker clients stems from a fear of truck drivers that immediately occludes whatever positive experiences they may have had with individual drivers. Much of this fear surrounds the truck itself because it basically makes it more difficult for these women to control their environment which is an important way for these women to stay safe.

In the beginning of this chapter, I quoted from a feature edition of *Overdrive* magazine that was about female sex workers. It emphasized the dangers that prostitutes bring to the truck stops and truck drivers but did not really talk about the danger these women face. Over the last few years at least four serial killers were truckers who have been arrested in murder cases involving truck stop sex workers. The Federal Bureau of Investigation maintains a database of 500 hundred unsolved murders nationwide, with most victims being sex workers that worked at truck stops and were later found murdered along interstates (Glover 2009). The database contains the details of unsolved murder cases as well as potential suspects and cross checks those with other crimes and criminal profiles (FBI 2009). Although the FBI's efforts are reactionary they are still an important way to signal to killers that these women will get justice. Ten people accused of involvement in 30 different murders have already been arrested because of the Highway Serial Killings Initiative (FBI 2009).

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<sup>48</sup> One woman had built a solid friendship with a driver who helped her out on occasion and did not force her to 'date' meaning not all of the encounters were built around sex for money. Others mentioned a "Christian" driver who did not actually date that lets them get into his truck to get warm. Another woman spent several days with a truck driver and she was paid 500.00 for her time. Plus, she had a good time.

The FBI contends that the perpetrators are most likely truck drivers because they have the ability to create ‘mobile crime scenes,’ have access to a vulnerable population, and can evade detection by law enforcement. Drivers and industry advocates understandably feel the FBI initiative is just another way that truck drivers are stigmatized. The FBI’s use of the phrase ‘mobile crime scene’ reproduces these notions that truckers are dangerous because they are mobile and difficult to surveil even though this is an era in which drivers can *potentially* be tracked more than ever through technologies such as onboard satellites and GPS tracking. The supposed ‘access’ the FBI refers to apparently stems from drivers’ use of truck stops. But these connections are problematic because truck drivers are not the only people engaged in mobile lives and occupations. They are also not the only people who use truck stops. In fact traditional truck stop chains, like Pilot, are now using the term ‘travel centers’ and are targeting business travelers and family travel.

As the FBI officials argue, the truck stop is so sexualized and such a dangerous place for sex workers that many of these women have likely fallen prey to killers emboldened by mobility and anonymity. My talks with sex workers in the Pacific Northwest confirms that this is a violent workplace for sex workers although not all drivers treat them poorly. However, it is possible that the connection between serial killers in truck drivers might be based on stigma of truck driving as an occupation as well as stigma attached to mobile populations.

### **Anti-Trafficking**

Connected with the issue of sex work at truck stops, is sex trafficking. If nothing else convinces people that this is a highly sexualized workplace, the fact that no less than

three non-profit organizations deal with the issue of sexuality in the trucking industry should convince them.<sup>49</sup> I examined three faith-based organizations, The Defenders, All Things New, and Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT) that are involved in addressing the issue of sex trafficking in the trucking industry. I conducted interviews with Lyn Thompson of TAT and Linda Caswell of All Things New. Within all of these groups I found a deeply spatialized discourse about mobility, morality, and heroes. While I talk about The Defenders and All Things New, most of this section will be about TAT because their sole focus is on truck drivers.

There are some basic characteristics of these organizations that have a common goal of ending sex trafficking, but they have vastly different approaches.<sup>50</sup> All three organizations focus on minor girls in sex trafficking. The Defenders are best known for their truck stop protests.<sup>51</sup> Typically signs for these demonstrations read: “Stop buying our girls”, “It wasn’t her choice,” and “Girls are being sold at truck stops.” Their rhetoric also takes a spatial turn when it claims that “This type of activity takes place in the darkest corners of our culture” and “We need to make truck stops... a safe and clean environment again.” (USA, 2008). The Defenders see truck stops as sites of filth and

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<sup>49</sup> This does not even include organizations, like Transport for Christ, that indirectly deal with prostitution and pornography at truck stops.

<sup>50</sup> These organizations are also right leaning in their faith and politics. Linda Caswell, for example, formerly worked with Concerned Women for America, a decidedly right wing advocacy group that focuses on “family values”.

<sup>51</sup> The Defenders is an offshoot of Shared Hope International which is an organization that seeks to end sex trafficking. The Defenders take a more critical approach by problematizing male sexuality, that they argue leads to the exploitation of children. Members are men who have pledged to fight things like pornography that they believe is perpetuating sex trafficking. These men also agree to fight trafficking in their hometowns and spread the word about sex trafficking

exploitation and in need of cleaning.<sup>52</sup> They hold drivers responsible for their role in perpetuating sex trafficking.

All Things New is an organization that houses girls who have been rescued from truck stops near Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Unlike the other two groups they will provide actual physical care, housing, and counseling to the girls they rescue from truck stops. Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT), also based in Oklahoma City, has a nationwide campaign to get truck drivers to contact the National Human Trafficking Resource Center's (NHTRC) toll free number to report suspected sex trafficking of minors.

TAT has created handout materials that were printed for truck drivers. They have a wallet card that gives drivers signs to be looking for that include:

“Lack of Knowledge about their community or whereabouts; not in control of own identification documents; restricted or controlled communication; and a demeanor of fear, anxiety, depression, submissive, tense or nervous.” (“Truckers Against Trafficking: Human Trafficking 101,” 2010).

The wallet cards include facts about trafficking as well as questions drivers should ask if they suspect trafficking such as

“Are you being paid? Are you being watched or followed? Are you free to leave? Are you physically or sexually abused? Are you and your family threatened? What is the nature of the threats?”

The cards encourage drivers to “Make the Call, Save Lives” Another part of the mission is getting drivers to not see these girls as prostitutes but rather trafficked children. TAT

gives out hats, window decals so they can be identified as TAT supporters to other drivers and girls. TAT also has an active Twitter feed where they emphasize that drivers can be heroes by calling the national hotline.

A fascinating part about TAT is that the leaders see drivers as omnipotent surveyors of the landscape. And instead of seeing truckers' mobility and access to truck stops and rest areas as signs of depravity, they are considered to be the essential characteristics for rescuers and heroes. The crucial part of TAT's mission is one where drivers are the "eyes and ears of our nation's highways." Lyn Thompson, co-founder of TAT, tells drivers that they are already trained to be vigilant observers who go where most people cannot.

Another part of the mission is making drivers aware that their lack of attention exacerbates the predicaments of trafficked girls. When drivers told Lyn that they just avoid those kinds of truck stops she countered that drivers should be more proactive. Lyn says drivers may be the only hope for these girls and may even take the place of law enforcement. She asked,

"What if you just drove by, stop across the street even, and watch and if you saw any of that make a phone call? Because otherwise these young girls have no chance of rescue and it's like you're in a never ending nightmare. You're beaten. You're tortured. You're threatened. There's no end to it. ... They're afraid to call the police. There's just no hope for them."

TAT further posits that drivers can use peer pressure to get other drivers to not use the services of prostitutes, specifically underage sex workers.

"Look, if we got the majority of the trucking population mobilized to see this happening through peer pressure, through the calls coming in, and traffickers being afraid to go there anymore you're going to stop this kind of activity."

TAT has gotten a lot of exposure through satellite radio, trucking industry groups, and the trucking press. TAT has been successful in their efforts as evidenced by the fact that drivers have been calling the hotline for National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC). In a personal email communication with NHTRC, they reported that 47 different truck drivers called in with tips and around 24 of those heard about the hotline from radio shows or TAT commercials. Also TAT received a lot of tips directly after their appearance on radio shows.

So what does that mean if trafficking moves away from truck stops? The geographic literature tells us that usually the activity just moves on to another place or to different venues. The founder of All Things New, Linda Caswell, acknowledges this paradox and explains that if there is a crackdown at truck stops then the sex workers will move to the rest areas. Crackdowns by law enforcement and truck stops do not really help to solve the problem

“[it]...doesn’t stop the problem. It stops on their property...but it just goes elsewhere”

Neither Lyn nor Linda mentioned the reality that drivers also elude security restrictions by bringing sex workers into truck stops in their truck or that some drivers are also involved in trafficking. So at the very least, we can see how traffickers use spatial adaptations to ply their trade and drivers who want to similarly adapt to the spatial challenges of truck stop security. These spatial adaptations also explain the persistence of sex work and sex trafficking in the industry.

The messages of TAT, All Things New, and the Defenders revolve around minors in sex trafficking at truck stops. Legally, if they are under eighteen they are trafficked.

Therefore, these girls are innocent; they did not *choose* to become prostitutes. By circumscribing their efforts around minors, these groups do not have to address the ways in which prostitution at truck stops is chosen by some women as a means of survival or to support their families (Bertone, 2000; Doezma, 2000). Both Lyn and Linda denied that any sizeable number of women knowingly engage in prostitution even though some trafficking experts argue that trafficked adults sometimes know they are going to be engaged in some sort of sexually related job (Bertone, 2000; Doezma, 2000; Yea, 2005). They just usually are not aware of how bad their living conditions will be.

Also I found this statement on a TAT poster to be strange: “Lot lizards is not an accurate term for many of the girls being prostituted at truck stops and rest areas.” This seems to imply that there are women who are rightfully called Lot Lizards. Is it ever “accurate” to use a dehumanizing term for a vulnerable person on the margins of society who receives nothing but disdain from the very people who use her services?

Again, we see that trucking is an industry steeped in sexuality and there are organizations that seek to eliminate certain aspects of that sexuality, namely the sex trafficking of minors. I have argued that these various sexual subcultures feed off of the mobility and decentralization but in this case, at least according to TAT, drivers’ mobility is a useful tool for saving young girls from sex trafficking.



## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued that people in trucking are finally acknowledging the sexuality that is very much a part of this industry. I fully expect that some of my findings will be dismissed as only applying to the worst kind of truck driver. Nevertheless, I would like for this work to further open up an honest, nonjudgmental discussion about the fact that sex is an important part of what it means to be a truck driver. Whether drivers are participating in road sex or not, the sexually charged spaces of the industry are going to exist regardless and it has real consequences for drivers. This chapter has shown that, contrary to the quotes denying the various forms sexuality found in this industry, the workplace can be highly sexualized.

There are drivers who dated and married other truck drivers although several drivers felt that the industry's atmosphere is oversexed. There is also an LGBT subculture where gay drivers have active social lives and serve as a support network for each other. Many drivers do not experience a lot of homophobia in their job, but the aloneness and the homophobic airwaves on the CB leads some drivers to stay in the closet out of fear. So there is a good mobility where drivers are able to find partners and enjoy their time on the road. However, the mobility and decentralization keeps some drivers from having a sex life because they fear homophobic attacks.

Clearly there are two subcultures that have arisen out of this sexualized mobility and decentralization. The prime examples of this would be the truck chasers and drivers who engage in paying for female sex workers. Unfortunately these subcultures objectify and dehumanize their partners. Truck chasers rely on class stereotypes to fetishize drivers and

the trucking johns of the truck stops deny they even use the services of sex workers. Fear and danger also play a role in these sexually charged spaces. The prevalence of sex work has led to a problem with sex trafficking. Interestingly, groups like Truckers Against Trafficking see sex trafficking as bad mobility but they also see mobility as a good thing because it gives truck drivers a way to be heroes by combating sex trafficking of minors.

The truth is that unlike Hart's (1995) claim that clients of sex workers can move in and out of zones of prostitution untainted does not apply in trucking as evidenced by drivers who resent other drivers that use sex workers, the non-profits that focus their efforts on truck drivers, and an FBI database that links drivers to murders of sex workers. This research seeks to humanize sex workers at truck stops. The successful steps that TAT takes to educate drivers about sex trafficking of minors, like awareness campaigns and even peer pressure, could work in the context of the so-called Lot Lizard. Drivers need to be educated about the fact that these women are highly vulnerable to violence and even murder at the hands of their peers.

This research also deals with the LGBT drivers in an effort to recognize their presence and value to the trucking industry in hopes that other drivers will acknowledge that. On one hand, I have shown that there is some homophobia in this working class job, but not as much as the literature would have readers believe. In fact, the mobility of these drivers makes it possible for them to meet other LGBT people in the industry and create a support network for themselves. I would argue that both gay and straight drivers need to be talking back to the homophobia they hear on the CB. Silence is complicity in this context. Also, in regards to the truck chasing culture, it is clear that chasers and drivers

are engaged in a class struggle. This research should lead chasers to consider the class based assumptions they utilize to dehumanize their objects of desire. However, I also want this research to demonstrate that sexual desires come in a variety of forms that cannot be pinned down to gay or straight.

## Chapter 8: Concluding Thoughts

The lives of these men and women exemplify Peter Merriman's (Merriman, 2007) argument that highways are not just spaces that get us from here to there. It is a place where real lives are made, changed, and remade. The trucking industry is not just about getting products from the factory to the consumer. It is also a vibrant sub-culture in which drivers recall a past brotherhood where drivers helped each other, respected their colleagues, and extended common courtesies. And they remember a public that saw them as *trustable* knights of the highway. Many drivers see that way of life slipping away and give numerous examples of how their workplace has changed for the worse. There have been drastic changes in the experience of trucking in the form of deregulation, government re-regulation, the realities of life on the road, the image of truck drivers, the demands of home life, and driver health. The experience of women and sexual minorities also add a dimension to this industry not previously acknowledged.

Most of my respondents said that this highly mobile job allowed them to work in a place where they are not sitting behind a desk and are not constantly being watched by their supervisor. Drivers are also allowed to determine their schedule and how to get their work done. However, despite cultural discourses involving mobility and freedom, I found that the nature of this workplace creates a scenario where workers are actually restrained by mobility. Drivers must deal with safety issues, traffic, bad weather, and maneuver 80,000 pound vehicles through towns and cities that were not designed for these kinds of vehicles. In order for drivers to address these challenges, many of them rely on mental mappings about where they want to drive. I also found that drivers use mental mapping to

help improve their safety and comfort on the road. At the same time, overcoming these obstacles on the road allowed drivers to improve self-confidence.

The image of truck drivers on the road is often referred to as knights on the highway and highway cowboys. As this research has demonstrated, drivers often imagine themselves as self-sufficient and alone. However I found that drivers need each other's counsel and support. Life on the road has also changed over the years particularly in terms of drivers socializing. Older drivers described a workplace where they frequently socialized with other drivers especially at truck stops. The citizens band radio was another major space of socializing. Some drivers say that younger drivers are not taught basic courtesies of the road and that they are not as interested in preserving the culture of trucking. However, I found that younger drivers also socialize in traditional ways, such as sitting with others at truck stop diners and talking on the CB. The main difference is that cell phones are now a primary source of communication for many drivers. Furthermore, many of the drivers I spoke to had deep, significant, and abiding friendships with their fellow drivers and count on each other for support.

The mobility of the road also has consequences for the bodies of truck drivers. Because drivers are often sedentary and lack the resources for eating and living healthy, they face a whole host of diseases that are linked to this workplace lifestyle. Drivers face heart disease, diabetes, injuries, cancer, muscular skeletal disorders, and obesity. There is little effort to improve these working conditions other than blaming drivers for health issues that are a direct consequence of this workplace. Many of these conditions disqualify truckers for driving because these diseases pose a threat to the safety of the motoring

public. Basically, life on the road wears bodies out and the industry then disposes of these expendable bodies.

There are an increasing number of surveillance technologies that are being used in this workplace and it clearly limits the freedom that is so often viewed as a positive aspect of being an over the road truck driver. This surveillance is deemed necessary for companies because this is such a mobile and decentralized industry. The most commonly discussed technology is Qualcomm, a satellite-based product that provides communication about loads and delivery through the dispatcher, monitors mileage and time, as well as GPS. In the end, these technologies take a significant amount of control away from drivers.

On the other hand, I found that there is some nuance in how drivers view surveillance. While there were drivers who see these technologies as Big Brother, some drivers, especially women, like Qualcomm because it provides a measure of safety if they are broken down somewhere. I also talked with a driver who made fun of coworkers who sabotaged their Qualcomm units and he stressed the safety aspects of this satellite technology. Furthermore, some drivers liked the fact that they did not have to sit and wait for their dispatcher to call them with their next load assignment; all of that information was available almost immediately through their Qualcomm unit.

An additional finding involved e-screening and TWIC cards. Both of these surveillance efforts benefit the State because they allow control over trucks by screening for safety records, paid taxes, credentials. However, like Qualcomm, these technologies also benefit companies and drivers. Again, we have some nuance here as drivers like the time they

save using PrePass and owner operators especially like TWIC because it can give them access to more loads and thus more profit.

Most of the drivers I spoke with loved their job. At the same time, they missed their home and family. Drivers often feel guilty about leaving their family so they emphasize their importance to family finances. However, even when drivers are at home, they are often not present with their family because they are focused on preparing for their next trip.

Obviously, having a partner or parent that is frequently away from home can be emotionally difficult. For example, family members might resent their driver's time away from home. However, loved ones must also find ways to adapt to this lifestyle and in some cases the person at home gets comfortable with their new found authority. Also, I had drivers who said that being away from their partner for extended periods of time actually saved their marriage.

I found three ways in which driver identities were shaped by the mobility of this industry. First, drivers perceive that their occupation is stigmatized by the public. This stigma results in negative images that drivers resent. They blame this stigma on the "bad apples" of the bunch that are dangerous drivers, dirty, and behave unprofessionally. So drivers often engage in a kind of body policing to make sure that their bodies and the bodies of other drivers meet the criteria for a "good" truck driver bodies. Drivers also blame the media for perpetuating negative images of truck drivers.

Second, this is a hypermasculine environment that encourages machismo and punishes femininity. Women face extensive harassment throughout their career although it usually

first appears during the training phase. This harassment is meant to put women in their place and thus to marginalize them. However, these women do not quit because they love their job and they make good money. So these women find ways to make their bodies fit into this industry and, in many cases, these women throw each other under the bus in order to claim their rightful place in this workplace. In many cases, drivers use traditional gender norms to set themselves apart from women they think encourage harassment by portraying themselves as ladies. Women may reconfigure gender norms by relying on both masculinity and femininity to get their jobs done. Furthermore, women develop friendships with men to stem the fear, danger, and frustration of harassment. These women may even participate in making other women uncomfortable by engaging in rumor mongering with male drivers. I also show how women use humor to blunt the pain of exclusion and marginalization. However, I found evidence of a feminization of this workplace where companies and other drivers claim that women are actually better drivers than men because they behave more professionally and work better with customers. In the end, women drivers must negotiate their identity as women with their occupation in a hypermasculine environment.

Thirdly, although the industry tries to downplay sexual identity in this workplace, sexuality is very much a part of being a truck driver. Heterosexual identity is clearly present among truck drivers. As a result, the mobility and anonymity of truck drivers allows them to engage in behavior they may not engage in at home. This is obviously demonstrated in the prevalence of sex workers around the spaces of trucking and non-profits battling sex trafficking. There is also a sub-culture of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. Some LGBT persons, face homophobia from other drivers. At the same time



some drivers say that people often do not care about whether or not another driver is gay although all of the drivers admitted that the CB is a homophobic space. On the other hand, this is also an industry that challenges sexual identity altogether. This is most obvious in the truck chasing subculture where (mostly) male drivers participate in sexual liaisons with other men, but would deny an identity as gay or bisexual. This part of sexuality and trucking has resulted in an entire pornographic genre focused on the sexual exploits of truck drivers.

This research examined the trucking industry as a space of work and uses a variety of literatures to describe how a workplace steeped in mobility both liberates and ensnares its workers; helps them provide for their family but takes them away from their family for long periods of time; causes them to long for home but then long to be back out there on the road; allows women to make a solid middle class living but forces them to endure gender bias and harassment from coworkers, customers, and the public on a daily basis; and denies sexuality but provides ample opportunity for varying forms of pleasure. In short, this project examined a workplace that has been described as the ‘worst job you’ll ever love’.

## Appendix 1

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Years in Trucking</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	<b>Location of Interviews</b>	<b>Company Driver or Owner Operator</b>
Bill	Male	30	White	9	straight	Restaurant	Company
Brandon	Male	50	White	25	gay	Telephone	Owner operator
Buck	Male	44	White	17	gay	Residence	Company
Chris	Male	39	White	24	gay	Truck cab	Owner operator
Connor	Male	54	White	2	straight	Restaurant	Owner operator
Cynthia	Female	31	White	3	Lesbian	Restaurant	Company
Earline	Female	67	White	35	Straight	Telephone	Company
Edgar	Male	65	White	52	Straight	Telephone	Owner operator
Emilio	Male	59	Latino	5	straight	Telephone	Company
Harold	Male	40	White	15	Gay	Telephone	Owner operator
Jennifer	Female	40's	White	5	straight	Telephone	Company
Joe	Male	60's	White	20	straight	Residence	Owner operator
Jonathan	Male	63	white	11	straight	Restaurant	Company
Josie	Female	39	White	10	Straight	Workplace	Company
Judith	Female	61	White	20	Straight	Restaurant	Company
Kevin	Male	32	White	14	gay	Residence	Company
Maya	Female	41	Native American	3	Straight	Telephone	Company
Michelle	Female	48	White	10	Straight	Restaurant	Company
Neil	Male	62	White	10	Straight	Restaurant	Owner operator
Patrick	Male	40	White	10	straight	Residence	Owner operator
Phil	Male	58	White	5	Straight	Residence	Owner operator
Ralph	Male	62	White	37	straight	Residence	Company
Sam	Male	40	White	15	straight	Restaurant	Company
Sarah	Female	50's	White	5	straight	Residence	Owner operator
Stephanie	Female	63	White	6	straight	Residence	Owner operator
Tammy	Female	49	white	7	straight	Restaurant	Owner operator

Terrance	Male	60's	White	45	straight	Telephone	Company
Tonya	Female	50	African American	10	straight	Restaurant	Company
Tyler	Male	57	African American	2	straight	Telephone	Company

## Appendix 2

<b>Major Stakeholders in the United States Trucking Industry</b>	
<b>Motor Carriers</b>	The top five truck load motor carriers in the United States are: J.B. Hunt, Swift Transportation Schneider Landstar System Werner Enterprises ("Top 50 Trucking Companies ", 2014)
<b>United States Department of Transportation (USDOT)</b>	A federal agency that ensures safety, access, efficiency, and profitability of the nation's transportation systems.
<b>Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)</b>	An agency of the USDOT that works to prevent accidents and injuries involving commercial vehicles. This agency oversees licensing for commercial vehicle drivers, funds safety inspections at the state level, conducts research, and monitors the safety records of motor carriers.
<b>Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)</b>	Another agency under the USDOT that works to protect and improve infrastructure elements such as highways, bridges, and tunnels as well as safety on the nation's highways. This agency is often encountered through weight laws. FHWA works extensively with state and local officials in their efforts to preserve infrastructure.
<b>State law enforcement</b>	Many federal regulations are enforced at the state level. These responsibilities include weight laws, safety inspections, and collecting tax revenue. There is a wide variety of law enforcement departments at the state level that are too numerous to fully examine in this work. For example, some states might have their own Department of Transportation for commercial vehicle enforcement while other states might include enforcement within their state police agencies. Enforcement typically takes place at the roadside and/or at weigh/inspection stations.

<b>American Trucking Associations (ATA)</b>	This is the largest trucking trade association in the United States that seeks to represent the interests of the trucking industry through policy advocacy and awareness. The ATA also works with and speaks for state-based trucking trade associations.
<b>Owner Operator Independent Driver Association (OOIDA)</b>	This is another trade association in the trucking industry although it is focused on owner operators who lease on to companies or owner operators that work on an independent basis.
<b>International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT)</b>	This is a century old labor union that currently has 75,000 members within their freight division. Although it was once a powerful labor union in the trucking industry as a whole, following deregulation most of the membership is in the less- than- truckload sector of the trucking industry. Since the respondents in this study are in the truck load sector, there are no IBT members in my sample. However, there were respondents that were former Teamsters.

## Appendix 3

**Table 1 Coding for Discourse Analysis**

<b>The Road</b>	<b>Bodies</b>	<b>Sexuality</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Home and Family	Old Drivers	Chaser cruising	Harassment
Scary Spaces	Safety	Relationships	Training
Accomplishment	Hygiene	Homophobia	Relationships with other Women
Good/Bad Drivers	Negative image	LGBT	Male drivers
Freedom	Health	Sex Workers	Family
Surveillance		Queer	Gender Expression
Camaraderie		Temptation	Resistance
Customers		Fetishtization/Image	Why trucking
Industry Change		friendships	Obstacles
Hours of Service			Discrimination
Team Driving			Changed
Four Wheelers			Qualcomm
Driver Shortage			Different Bodies
Difference			Danger
Loneliness			
Deregulation			

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### **Publications**

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*Forthcoming* Book Review of Red Lights: The Lives of Sex Workers in Post-Socialist China in Third Space: A Journal of Feminist Theory and Culture

### **Professional Service**

2007 Professional Development Committee, Department of Geography

2008 Undergraduate Committee, Department of Geography

2009 Speaker, Geography Graduate Student Union, Department of Geography