

Exploring the Core of High-Risk Networks

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Project Description

Research shows that most men who use multiple types of public venues (bathhouses, sex clubs, parks, bars, etc.) to meet and engage other men reported high-risk behavior. These findings lead us to hypothesize that these high-risk men are a significant proportion of the core of high-risk networks; yet we know little about them. The purpose of this study is to narrow the focus of research to this core, to learn more about their intimate encounters.

The specific aims are to examine

- How particular venues influence intimate encounters
- The interaction dynamics within the intimate encounter
- What casual intimacy means to core members

We will draw a probability sample of men exiting two San Francisco sex clubs (n=300). Using audio-assisted computer self-interview (ACASI), men will complete a brief survey on site. This exit survey will identify a subsample of men who are core members and they will be invited to participate in a face-to-face qualitative interview (n=50) at a later date at the study offices.

The exit survey data provide an opportunity to learn of club behavior of patrons. As such we will explore the following secondary aims:

- On-site and overall risk behavior of club patron
- The use of the Internet to meet men

Significance

In an environment of limited economic resources, focusing HIV prevention on those most likely to engage in HIV risk behavior is critical. During a one-year period the majority (about three-quarters) of men who have intimate physical contact with non-primary partners do not engage in high-risk behavior. Nevertheless, the other quarter of men who do engage in high-risk behavior account for a perilous spread of HIV and other infections transmitted through intimate contact.

Project End Date: December 2008