

Psychosocial Experiences of East and Southeast Asian Men Who Use Gay Internet Chatrooms in Toronto: An Implication for HIV/AIDS Prevention¹

Maurice Kwong-Lai Poon , Peter Trung-Thu Ho,
Josephine Pui-Hing Wong, Gabriel Wong &
Ruthann Lee

Objectives. *In recent years we have witnessed an increase in Asian men who use gay Internet chatrooms in Toronto. Previous research has shown that many men who had sex with men (MSM) sought sex partners through the Internet and that meeting sex partners via the Internet increases sexually transmitted infection (STI) and HIV risk. This study aims to (1) explore psychosocial issues relating to Asian men who use gay chatrooms and (2) identify culturally appropriate HIV prevention strategies for this population.*

Design. *In-depth interviews were conducted with a total of 21 East and Southeast Asian men who used Internet gay chatrooms. Unstructured, open-ended questions were used to obtain narrative data to help understand their lived, psychosocial experiences of gay chatrooms. Transcripts of the interviews were read to highlight themes and concepts.*

Results. *Analysis revealed complex lived, psychosocial experiences of Asian men who use gay chatrooms in Toronto. They tended to be socially isolated and highly marginalized, which had led to intense needs for social connections and thus left some Asian men vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Although they were fully aware that they should use condoms in anal intercourse with a casual partner, they had some misconceptions about*

Correspondence to: Maurice Poon, Asian Community AIDS Services, 33 Isabella St., Suite 107, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4Y 2P7. Email: gaap@acas.org

HIV. Moreover, they rarely, if ever, used condoms in oral sex with a casual partner, which might leave them vulnerable to STI.

Conclusions. *It is important for service providers to continually provide accurate information about STIs and HIV/AIDS including how they can be contracted. However, HIV prevention strategies for this population must also address issues relating to social isolation and marginalization in order to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS effectively. This can be accomplished by an online peer support program.*

Keywords: HIV/AIDS; Prevention; Asian MSM; Gay Asian Men; Social Services

It has been over three decades since the AIDS epidemic began. However, little research has been conducted to guide the development of AIDS prevention for the Canadian East and Southeast Asian community, the largest racial minority group in Canada—approximately 5.8% ($n = 1,710,825$) of the total population. In very large urban centres such as Toronto and Vancouver, East and Southeast Asian people account for more than 17% ($n = 421,390$) and 39% ($n = 212,275$) of the population, respectively² (Statistics Canada 2001).

The reported AIDS cases among East and Southeast Asian people in Canada are relatively low, around 1.4% of the total national cases between 1991 and 2000 (Health Canada 2001). However, this number may not reflect the actual effects and trends of the AIDS epidemic on the Asian community. The AIDS cases may have been underestimated or under-reported due to misclassification of race or ethnicity on the medical record. There is also ‘a wide variation in the completeness of ethnic status reporting among regions’ (Health Canada 2001, p. 54). Information regarding gender and the exposure category among reported AIDS cases in the East and Southeast Asian population is not provided in Canada.

There have been only a few studies ever conducted to explore issues relating to HIV/AIDS and Asian³ men who have sex with men (MSM) in Canada even though MSM are severely affected by the disease. However, available data suggest that Asian MSM in Canada are at high risk of HIV infection and that they tend not to seek early HIV testing. For example, one Canadian study found that Chinese MSM lacked knowledge about AIDS transmission (Singer *et al.* 1996) and another study in Toronto found that East Asian and Southeast Asian MSM had multiple sexual partners in the previous six months (an average of 27 and 11, respectively) (Toronto Three Cities Project 2000). Moreover, a Vancouver study reported that a sizeable percentage of the 102 Asian MSM studied did not consider receptive anal sex without condoms (30%) and insertive anal sex without condoms (25%) to be high-risk sexual activities. The same study also found that 34% of Asian MSM had unprotected receptive anal sex to ejaculation with their primary sexual partners and that 35% had never been tested for HIV (Bhat *et al.* 1994).

Consistent results are reported in the USA. For example, a San Francisco study found that only 17% of the 241 Asian and Pacific Islander MSM studied believed they were at risk of HIV infection and that 59% had multiple sex partners during the past three months (Choi *et al.* 1995). Other US studies also reported high rates of unprotected anal intercourse among Asian MSM (between 27 and 31% in the previous three months) and high percentages of Asian MSM who have never been tested for HIV (between 30 and 38%) (see Poon *et al.* 2001).

Moreover, qualitative data in Canada and the USA have identified some social and cultural specific factors associated with increased HIV risk for Asian MSM. For example, a recent Canadian study demonstrated that due to negative stereotypes about gay Asian men, young Asian MSM found it difficult to negotiate safer sex practice with their partner (Poon & Ho 2002). Similarly, a US study has shown that due to both racism in the gay community and homophobia in the Asian community, Asian MSM tend to be socially isolated and thus express intense needs for closeness and emotional connections that in turn, often under the influence of drugs and alcohol, lead to high-risk sexual activities (Nemoto *et al.* 2003; see also Choi *et al.* 1999). Hence, to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Asian MSM community, culturally specific HIV prevention strategies are needed.

In recent years, the Internet has become more accessible and popular to the general public. More gay men and MSM use the Internet to search information, to seek social and community support and, in some cases, to explore their own sexual identity (Tsang 1996; Hillier *et al.* 2001). A recent UK study has reported that of the 121 gay Asian men who participated in the study and used the Internet, 70% used chatrooms (Weatherburn *et al.* 2003). Other recent research also found that among gay men, 'the Internet was the second most popular setting for meeting sexual partners, after pubs and clubs' (51% of the 11,110 gay men studied had met a new sexual partner there in the last year) (Weatherburn *et al.* 2003, p. 15) and that meeting sex partners via the Internet increases risk of sexually transmitted infection (STI) and HIV infection (Elford *et al.* 2001; Benotsch *et al.* 2002). In light of these findings, we were interested in exploring issues relating to Asian men who use gay chatrooms and developing culturally appropriate HIV prevention strategies for this population.

Study Design

Purpose of the Study

According to Tooru Nemoto *et al.* (1998, p. 41):

[An] individual's actions and experiences [are] the consequences of how that person functions as a situated actor within the historically grounded political, economic, social, and cultural processes that frame and influence knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors about HIV/AIDS. Thus, if one is to appropriately address HIV prevention, one has to consider how individuals function as subjective and objective actors within systemic contexts.

In other words, to develop an effective HIV prevention strategy, we must understand how these individuals operate within their social and systemic contexts. Guided by this insight, we developed this study with an objective to understand the lived, psychosocial experience of Asian men who use gay chatrooms and, in doing so, to identify a culturally appropriate HIV prevention strategy for this population.

Conceptual Framework

A *constructivist grounded theory* approach was selected as a theoretical framework to guide this study since it is useful in exploring social processes and revealing how people anticipate and respond to various life circumstances. It aims to foster 'the development of qualitative traditions through the study of experience from the standpoint of those who live it' (Charmaz 2000, p. 522; see also Strauss & Corbin 1994). Accordingly, the approach is well suited for the objective of this study. Rather than beginning with a pre-established theory, a *constructivist grounded theory* approach aims to develop theory grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed: 'Theorizing is the act of *constructing* from data an explanatory scheme that systematically integrates various concepts through statements of relationships' (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 25).

In this approach, sampling is accomplished with a goal to refine concepts and develop them as theoretical constructs: researchers purposively select participants to generate data that fills conceptual gaps and holes in the development of formal theory. Data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously and interactively. Analysis relies on an inductive approach 'to develop open coding categories and then, through axial coding, to interrelate these categories' that represent phenomena (Creswell 1998, p. 209; see also Eaves 2001). 'In looking for phenomena, we are looking for repeated patterns of happenings, events or actions/interactions that represent what people do or say, alone or together, in response to the problems and situations in which they find themselves' (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 130). 'For outside reviewers to judge the quality of a grounded theory study, judgments are made about the "validity, reliability, and credibility" ... of the data within the standard canons of scientific research' (Creswell 1998, p. 209).

Method and Procedure

Consistent with grounded theory, an in-depth interviewing method was used to generate data. This method is useful in generating insights about one's experiences of themselves in their worlds. It also provides an opportunity for the narrators to tell their stories in their own terms (Anderson & Jack 1991). In particular, online interviews were conducted through real-time chat. 'Also known as synchronous communication, real-time chat is a communication in which messages are written and read at the same time, though in different places' (Mann & Stewart 2000, p. 11). It has been suggested that online interviewing through real-time chat is impersonal,

distancing and thus considered as a method that cannot facilitate detailed exploration of meaning, narrative and discourse (Davis *et al.* 2003). However, some researchers challenge this assumption and argue that warm relationships and highly interactive forms of communication can be developed online and that the quality of data depends not upon the medium itself, but upon the rapport and shared research agenda between the researcher and participants—particularly if participants found the research topic relevant to them and feel that they are being given an opportunity to be ‘heard’ in a meaningful way (Mann & Stewart 2000; Eysenbach & Wyatt 2002).

As Chwee Chng and John Collins (2000) point out, in many Asian cultures, sex and sexuality are topics that are not only sensitive but often prohibited to be discussed openly as well. Due to the different physical spaces occupied by the researcher and participants, online interviews allow participants to discuss sensitive issues without feeling embarrassed or being judged. This may encourage participants who would not or are unable to attend face-to-face interviews due to discomfort to participate. Moreover, participants are interviewed in places which they found comfortable, ‘which might allow communication to flow with a minimum of self-consciousness and self-restraint . . . As a consequence, interaction in the virtual field may lead to more direct communication and greater self-disclosure even about sensitive issues’ (Mann & Stewart 2000, p. 200). For these reasons we decided to interview participants online.

It was recognized that many Asian men who had sex with men and who were attracted to men physically, psychologically and/or emotionally did not identify themselves as gay, bi-sexual or even MSM and used gay chatrooms. We decided to use ‘site specific’ rather than sexual identification as a criteria to recruit potential participants. The criteria for participation in this study were (1) participants identified themselves as males of East and Southeast Asian descent and (2) participants used gay chatrooms in Toronto.

Using a snowball and purposive sampling method, participants were recruited through the Toronto-Asian chatroom in Gay.com, the only Asian MSM chatroom in Toronto at that time. Because this chatroom is deemed a public space, it was unnecessary to obtain consent from the users to use the chatroom for recruitment (see Eysenbach & Till 2001). In order to recruit a group of diverse participants, the recruitment was accomplished at different times of the day (morning, afternoon, evening and midnight). We assumed that people who used the chatroom at different times of the day might represent different types of users. For example, people who worked during the day might tend to use chatrooms at night for the obvious reason that they needed to work during the day; in contrast, students and younger users who lived with their parents might tend to use chatrooms more often during the day than at night because their parents were not home.

During the recruitment, the interviewer was in the chatroom to advertise the study, provide information about our organization and the study regarding its goals and methodology, and attempt to develop trust and rapport with potential participants. In order to avoid intrusion, we never initiated private contacts without users’

permission. At first, users who were recruited tended to be gay, younger (under 30 years old) and Chinese. To allow us to compare diverse experiences of Asian MSM in chatrooms and thus to refine concepts, we then specifically aimed at recruiting users who did not identify themselves as gay and who were older (over 30 years old) and not necessarily Chinese, through word of mouth in the chatroom (see Table 1 for socio-demographic characteristics of the participants). Our organization was known to the local Asian MSM community and had served this population for more than 10 years. The reputation of our organization may have further enhanced trust between the researcher and participants and thus encourage participation as well.

A total of 21 online interviews were conducted during June and August 2001 in private chatrooms utilizing software in Gay.com. All interviews were conducted by one of our research team members. This member identified himself as Asian and gay, and was familiar with the local Asian MSM population and the issues that they face. It was expected that his personal associations and knowledge about Asian MSM could make it easier for him to connect with participants and thus help facilitate the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately two hours. Before the interview began, the interviewer carefully explained the research goals and methodology to each participant and informed him that he could withdraw at anytime during the interview. A letter of consent was reviewed with each of the participants. Interviews were recorded through software in Gay.com and re-formatted in word documents.⁴ All participation was voluntary: no gift or honorarium was offered. To ensure that he met the criteria for participation, each participant was asked to ethnically identify himself before the interview proceeded.

Based on the literature and our clinical experience with Asian MSM, some specific issues concerning Asian MSM were identified, which included family and social support, dating and relationships, experiences in the chatroom, reasons for using the Internet and safer sex practice. The interviewer used these topics as a general guideline during the interviews to explore participants' lived, psychosocial experiences of gay chatrooms. However, no specific set of questions was developed for the interviews; rather, the interviewer used unstructured, open-ended questions to explore these issues. In so doing the interviewer was not only able to solicit information that we wanted to know, but concurrently also allowed participants to attribute meanings and interpretations to events and relationships in their own terms and discuss issues that were most relevant and important to them (Mann & Stewart 2000). To increase the research rigour, several mock online interviews were conducted before the actual data collection process began.

Data Analysis

In this study, data was generated online through real-time chat, in which participants described their experiences of chatrooms through a mutual dialogue with the interviewer. We thus treated the data as a 'dialogue' between the interviewer and participants. As Chris Mann and Fiona Stewart (2000, p. 182) say, 'people do not

“write” to their friends on the Internet, they “talk”. However, we acknowledged that this new form of communication (talking in writing) poses certain challenges, which will be discussed thoroughly later.

Data analysis was done by two of our research team members who first carefully read each interview transcript several times and conducted line-by-line open coding to highlight key phrases that represent themes. We then grouped similar coded phrases together to develop a list of emerging themes and categories. By grouping similar themes together, we further reduced themes and created clusters. Lastly, we compared themes against one another to develop categories and examine characteristics and dimensions of each of the categories identified. This process was performed independently by each of the two research team members. Subsequently, they met to discuss and compare the coded transcripts to determine, through mutual consensus, core categories and how these categories related to each other.

Preliminary findings were sent to 12 community members from two of our agency committees to obtain feedback and guide our overall understanding of the issues faced by this population. All feedback received was discussed among research team members and incorporated into the manuscript. Through an electronic posting in the Toronto-Asian chatroom in Gay.com and our agency’s email list that contained approximately 150 Asian members, we also invited people to attend a community forum where we presented an early configuration of this paper. Twenty-two Asian people attended this forum; they confirmed our findings.

Unlike quantitative research, the validity and reliability of a qualitative study is commonly judged by four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln 1995; Trochim 2000). In this study, credibility was established through triangulation of qualitative interviews and community consultations. Transferability and confirmability were enhanced through the community consultation process to verify and expand our understanding of participants’ experiences developed in data analysis. Dependability is enhanced through the process of data analysis: that is, having two research team members first independently code the data and then work collaboratively to develop core categories through mutual consensus (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Creswell 1998).

Demographics

Table 1 presents socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. A total of 21 participants were recruited. The majority ($n=20$) of participants identified themselves as gay. The mean age was 26.1 ranging from 18 to 39. Most participants ($n=15$) had lived in Canada for more than 10 years. The participants were born in nine different countries (mode: Canada) but ethnically many ($n=12$) identified themselves as Chinese or half Chinese. Many participants ($n=12$) were working full-time while 38% ($n=8$) of the respondents reported income earnings of over \$30,001 a year. The majority ($n=20$) of respondents had some level of university education.

Table 1 Characteristics of Interviewed Men ($n = 21$)

Sexual identification: gay = 20; bisexual = 1
Age: range = 18–39; mean = 26.1; SD = 5.2
Place of birth: Canada = 5; China = 3; Hong Kong = 3; Korea = 1; Laos = 1; Philippines = 2; Taiwan = 2; Thailand = 1; Vietnam = 3
Ethnic self-identification: Chinese = 8; Chinese-Korean = 1; Chinese-Japanese = 1; Chinese-Vietnamese-Thai = 1; Hong-Kong-Chinese = 1; Korean = 1; Filipino = 2; Taiwanese = 1; Spanish-Filipino = 1; Vietnamese = 3; Vietnamese-Canadian = 1
Years of living in Canada: 0–5 years = 4; 6–10 years = 1; 11–15 years = 4; 16–20 years = 6; 21–25 years = 2; 26–30 years = 1; 31–35 years = 1; 36–40 years = 1; unknown = 1
Education: high school only = 1; undergraduate education = 17; postgraduate education = 3
Yearly income (Canadian \$): <\$10,000 = 8; \$10,001–20,000 = 0; \$20,001–30,000 = 5; \$30,001–40,000 = 1; \$40,001–50,000 = 2; \$50,001–60,000 = 1; \$60,001–70,000 = 0; >\$70,001 = 4
Employment status: school = 4; work = 12; work/school = 3; unemployed = 1; vacation = 1

Results

Analysis revealed three core categories. Identified through participants' narratives, the first core category contains four sub-categories, illuminating the personal and social contexts in which Asian men use gay chatrooms. In the second category, we provide detailed descriptions of Asian men's experience in the chatrooms. The final category shows how sex intersects with chatrooms.

Contextualizing Chatroom Use

No place to go

Like previous research has shown (Ridge *et al.* 1999; Poon & Ho 2002), participants found that there was a lack of positive social space for gay Asian men to hang out and meet MSM. For example, participants often felt that they did not 'fit in' in a gay bar or dance club, which primarily catered to white men. Consequently, participants found it difficult to meet people there. Also among participants, there was some fear of being judged and harassed in gay bars and dance clubs. In fact, many reported such experiences. Unsurprisingly, they did not like frequenting gay bars or dance clubs:

When I am alone [in bars] I would be harassed by older men ... I mean old men who prey on younger Asians. (A 22-year-old participant)

I don't have any friends to go [to clubs] with. I don't want to go alone. It's not comfortable. There are a lot of older guys looking for the Asian type too. It's worse than [the net] 'cuz they can actually see you and they can approach you. (A 26-year-old participant)

I am shy in person when I meet people and plus I don't have much luck meeting new people at clubs and bars ... 'cuz I think being Asian has something to do with it ... you get ignored and people are so rude to you ... like at clubs you get like

dirty looks and pushed around. You get this feeling of 'not belonging'. (A 19-year-old participant)

As Dana Takagi (1996) argues, because social spaces such as bars and dance clubs in North America often cater to the mainstream gay (white) community, men of colour may feel pressured to adopt the dominant culture and act accordingly. Those who are not comfortable to adopt the dominant culture may feel 'too shy' to interact in such an environment.

Similarly, for fear of losing their anonymity, participants seldom, if ever, frequented a gay bathhouse, a commercial facility in which MSM meet for sex. Participants generally expressed a very negative perception about gay bathhouses and considered their users 'unsafe'.

I am not out, want to be discreet and anonymous, so [I] don't do bars/bath houses. (An 18-year-old participant)

I don't do bathhouses. Well it's not safe . . . like it's risky too so it doesn't appeal to me. (A 26-year-old participant)

Nor did participants find personal advertisements in newspapers and magazines to be a useful means of meeting MSM. For example, when asked whether he tried to meet people through personal advertisements in magazines and newspapers, a 22-year-old participant replied, 'No! I am not that desperate!!' Similarly, a 23-year-old participant remarked, 'I tried personal ads too in the newspaper. I so highly do not recommend it . . . none from that actually . . . because I don't meet anyone from it . . . and plus they make you pay to respond to ads.' In fact, some participants said that the chatroom was the only available option they had to meet MSM:

I don't know anywhere I can go . . . except here. (A 25-year-old participant)

With the limited resources I have no choice . . . Straight people can meet lovers at work and school. I only have dirty bars and clubs and gay.com. Most people want sex and it's very dirty. (A 19-year-old participant)

Social isolation

Analysis revealed that participants experienced various levels of social isolation—an issue often discussed in gay Asian literature (see, for example, Ridge *et al.* 1999; Poon 2000; Poon & Ho 2002). For example, some participants just came to Toronto and did not have any friends in the city: 'I just moved here two months ago . . . and I don't know anyone here' (a 22-year-old participant). Many were also dealing with coming out issues—a factor that further contributed to their sense of isolation. These participants reported feeling confused about their sexuality and stressed if people (particularly their family members) found out their same-sex desire:

I am not out to anyone yet. Well, I don't think it will do any good to tell [my parents] . . . like it's a lose-lose situation. There's no point. I haven't talked to them

in a year . . . I don't really want anyone to know . . . I'm not sure if I'm really gay.
(A 26-year-old participant)

No [I am not out] because I'm dependent on [my parents] and I don't think they would take it well . . . because they are conservative and they've got that old Chinese mentality to them. [Interviewer: do u find it stressful to come out to them?] Very much so to my family and friends 'cuz I don't want anything to change between us.
(An 18-year-old participant)

Surprisingly, even those participants who were 'out' also reported that, as a result of homophobia, they felt they were not connected with the gay community or received much support from their (straight) friends and family:

I am not talking about sex . . . I have sex with many white guys my age but that's just sex. I do feel 'alone' in the community . . . emotionally-wise. (A 22-year-old participant)

Support as in emotional support? Not a lot . . . I can't talk to my family about how I sleep around . . . or whom I fuck. (A 26-year-old participant)

Safety and anonymity

Consistent with earlier research (Hiller *et al.* 2001) participants found the Internet as a useful means of meeting MSM: it was not only easily accessible but also gave them a sense of control, safety and anonymity. This sense of safety and anonymity stood in stark contrast to their negative perceptions about other mainstream gay commercial facilities such as bars and dance clubs. Unsurprisingly, the chatroom became a popular medium for participants to meet MSM:

It is easily accessible and you can always close a window on an annoying loser . . . Plus with the Internet you don't have to give out phone numbers . . . um . . . the net's great . . . 'cuz you can see [pictures] of the person but still retain a bit of anonymity and there's just quite a bit of selection on the net. I can do it from the comfort of my bedroom . . . and you get to meet people outside our immediate sphere. (A 23-year-old participant)

Finding support

As previous research (Weatherburn *et al.* 2003) has indicated, participants reported multiple purposes of using the Internet (such as email, World Wide Web and chatrooms). We particularly asked participants what they used the chatroom for. Many said that they used it primarily for finding social support and meeting new friends (and of course possible lovers) and that the chatroom had provided them with a venue where they could easily locate people who share similar experience as being gay and Asian:

Actually I was just looking for friends . . . and people who are into the same suffering . . . isolation and stuff and I met a few . . . we [became] good friends.
(A 26-year-old participant)

Hmm . . . sometimes [I] want to have someone to chat with . . . also to enlarge the social circle. Believe it or not, [I met] all of my friends now I know through the Internet. (A 26-year-old participant)

But perhaps, it was the sense of safety and anonymity that the Internet provides that facilitated the participants' ability to connect and develop friendships with other chatroom users.

Experiences in the Chatroom

Participants spoke of their experiences in the chatroom. However, such experiences must be understood in larger social contexts. In the West, Asian men are commonly portrayed as skinny, effeminate, passive and submissive (see, for example, Fung 1996; Sanitioso 1999). This image of Asian men stands in stark contrast to the Western idea of male beauty, which firmly upholds the white, upper-middle class, able-bodied, masculine man as the social ideal.

Unsurprisingly, many participants preferred to date white men. Whiteness was used as a measure of attractiveness and often privileged over other personal characteristics such as age and personality. Asian men, in contrast, were considered unattractive and undesirable as long-term or sex partners. A 19-year-old participant said, 'I don't feel very attracted to gay Asian people and I'm sure most white guys think the same'. Similarly, one 26-year-old participant stated:

I like older guys . . . an old white guy is more attractive than Asians . . . compare someone who is white and 40 years old to an Asian . . . I found whites are more attractive. I like men with crow's feet and I like someone with dimple under the chin. It is hard to find in Asians . . . someone who has a dimple under the chin.

When asked why they preferred to date white men, some participants said that white men were better in bed than Asian men: 'I must say white guys are good at sex and they have good bodies if they are not too fat . . . Asian men are slim and cute but not good in bed' (a 28-year-old participant). Others considered dating a white man more normal and socially acceptable than dating a non-white man:

The whole gay Asian partners with gay Caucasians becomes a trend and more acceptable than gay Asian with gay African Canadians. It seems more normal to have a white boy with an Asian boy than Asians plus blacks. (A 22-year-old participant)

Still other participants said that they were afraid of being gossiped about because the Asian community was relatively small. Hence, if they went out with an Asian man, he might know their friends and family: 'I only meet white guys 'cause it is safe. I am little afraid of the Asian community because of the gossip' (a 28-year-old participant).

As shown in participants' narratives, the negative stereotypes and the ideal notion of male beauty have a powerful effect on a gay Asian man's life. They not only affected participants' racial preference for men but also structured the way in which users interacted with each other. For example, as participants described, many non-Asian users were not interested in chatting with Asian men since these users considered Asian men undesirable as potential long-term or sex partners:

Sometimes you try to talk to non-Asian [men and] they will cut me off right away simply because I am Asian. (A 37-year-old participant)

[People online] didn't really wanna talk to me if they knew I was Asian so I felt like hiding my ethnicity and pretend I was Caucasian. (An 18-year-old participant)

For the same reason, participants found even Asian men themselves not very interested in chatting with other Asian men. As a 28-year-old participant commented, 'Few people like to talk with Asian men and even Asian men themselves.' Similarly, a 19-year-old participant said, 'If I said I'm Asian, I usually get fewer responses. But if I don't say I'm Asian, I usually get more response. And I skip the other Asian messages. Again I am doing the same thing.'

As indicated by the participants, hostility was shown by some gay Asian men (particularly those who would seek white men for dating) towards other gay Asian men since they considered each other as competitors for the few white men who were attracted to Asian men (see McCaskell 1998; Ridge *et al.* 1999; Wat 2002).

I mean there are some white guys who like Asians in clubs but they seems like they already have partners . . . 'cuz there were some Asian men who were staring at me right next to their white partners in bars . . . their Asian eyes looking like telling me 'stay away from my partner'. (A 26-year-old participant)

Unfriendly remarks were also commonly made by some participants toward other gay Asian men in an attempt to distance themselves from the racist stereotypes: 'Most Asian [gay men] act like sissies going to molly maid camp . . . All they wanna look like is cute, docile and effeminate' (a 23-year-old participant). Unsurprisingly, within this social context, some participants internalized negative feelings about themselves and other gay Asian men:

I don't find myself very excited about chatting with someone who's Asian 'cuz I don't want to date anyone Asian. I live the stereotype that I hate. It's very weird but that's the way it is . . . you want the truth. That is the truth. But even if I am a stereotype or not, I don't think people online [or offline] give you a chance . . . I have some self-esteem problems mainly due to the Caucasian gay crowd. (A 19-year-old participant)

This does not necessarily mean that participants did not have any positive experience in the chatroom. Clearly, this was not the case. Many, in fact, had found

support from the chatroom and, in some cases, developed a strong network with other users. At times they reminded each other of safer sex practices and provided each other with social and emotional support:

Well . . . if a friend tells me he hooked up last night . . . I'll say something like . . . 'I hope you were safe' and leave it at that. (A 23-year-old participant)

I've listened to Asians all over . . . with their depressing stories and listening to them [depriving] themselves of their pride . . . belittling themselves ALL the time and I HATE having to listen to that . . . just last week, someone here in this room was insulting himself, saying he wasn't beautiful . . . I talked with him. He truly believed that he was worthless and ugly and deserved to die. (A 24-year-old participant)

Sex and the Chatroom

As previous research (Weatherburn *et al.* 2003) has shown, participants found it relatively easy to seek partners for physical sexual encounters through the chatroom: 'Talking on the net is easier too since a majority of [people] would go there for sex . . . just ask and people will reply' (a 26-year-old participant). However, many said that they came to the chatroom with no intention of seeking partners for physical sexual encounters but they did not reject such an idea and would do so if they found a man desirable.

These participants identified loneliness as the primary motivator for them to meet men from the chatroom for sex. Sex was used as an instrument to overcome feelings of loneliness and social isolation. For example, a 29-year-old closeted participant who reported using the chatroom mostly to seek men for sex said, 'I come online for the thrill and to live vicariously.' A 26-year-old participant also remarked, 'Usually boredom befriends with horniness. Sometimes I am bored . . . so I want to be fucked out of my mind.' Another 26-year-old participant said, 'I was lonely and bored, looking for contact with someone so I met him.'

However, not all participants intended to meet their cyber 'friends' for sex when they decided to meet these 'friends' offline in person. Instead, some said that they just wanted to meet their cyber 'friends' to hang out and 'kill' some time and that they were pressured by their cyber 'friends' into meeting them offline in person: 'Sometimes I am pressured into it. You know "why don't we meet?" It is not nice to say no after talking for so long' (a 22-year-old participant). These meetings, however, were not necessarily empowering and, in some cases, due to inexperience in dating and in the gay community, feelings of isolation, and desire to date white men, participants did not found mutual and equitable relationships with their cyber 'friends' when they met these 'friends' offline in person:

We chatted on icq for a while and one day we decided to meet . . . He wanted to start dating. I just went along with it. I don't like him that much . . . He's a whore though so I try to avoid him [now]. It was more of a sexual relationship. He was a

whore. I dunno what I was doing. He wanted sex. He's a horny asshole who's a whore. I just avoid him now cuz I think I was used for sex. (A 19-year-old participant)

He said he was 32. When I met him he had to be at least 43. I didn't plan to have sex with him. I just wanted to meet up. I didn't expect it to be sexual. I met him in a public place. We talked for a while and he invited me to his place for a drink. Well it was really hot and it was summer, [I] didn't have much to do so I went. I went up to his place and sat on the couch. It was really hot so I took off my shirt then he popped in a porn tape and he tried making moves on me. I resisted at first. Well he started kissing my body and he told me take off my pants so I did. (A 26-year-old participant)

We did not explicitly ask participants whether they engaged in unprotected anal sex because we considered that asking such a question was culturally inappropriate and that participants might not answer it accurately (Yi 1998; Poon & Ho 2002). Instead, we asked participants how they protected themselves from HIV infection. Three main groups were identified.

No casual sex

A number of participants reported that they did not engage in casual sex because they thought sex should take place only in relationships. The participants considered that they were much less likely infected with HIV and thus that unsafe sex was not an issue to them. For example, a 22-year-old participant stated, 'Much safer . . . when I am in a relationship, communication and trust is there. If you have casual sex, then they can lie to you about what they have or other STIs or anything.' Similarly, one 19-year-old participant said, 'I'm not too concerned about [the issue of unsafe sex] because I don't often participate in sexual activities unless I'm dating the person.'

No anal sex with casual partners

Other participants reported that they had casual sex but did not engage in anal intercourse with casual partners. For these participants, anal intercourse should take place only in long-term relationships, which often imply monogamy, intimacy, love and trust (see also Ridge *et al.* 1999; Ho & Tsang 2000). Thus, they considered that they were much less likely infected with HIV:

I don't do anal sex with a stranger. (A 23-year-old participant)

I don't do anal unless I am involved with a person in a relationship for a long period of time . . . because for me anal sex is either letting me into someone or letting someone into me . . . and that is not something I take lightly. For me it is just something I share with people who I am in a relationship for a while. It's just a part of sex that I don't do with strangers. (A 24-year-old participant)

However, these participants associated condom use only with anal intercourse and considered oral intercourse as safe sex. They seldom, if ever, used condoms in oral sex

with casual partners and did not think that they could potentially contract STIs. For example, when asked if he used condoms with his casual partners during oral sex, a 24-year-old participant replied, 'nope but I usually don't like to give. I am mostly a receiver.' Similarly, one 26-year-old participant stated, 'I tell them I am afraid of HIV so I don't do anal but never suck with a condom . . . don't want to get HIV so play safe. No penetration.'

Anal sex with casual partners

Participants who reported engaging in anal sex with casual partners also reported 'always' using condoms in anal sex to protect themselves from HIV infection. Interestingly, however, a number of these participants assumed that men with certain personal traits (such as age and occupations) were less likely HIV positive; thus, they considered having anal sex with these men to be 'safe' and used these traits as criteria to assess their potential risk of HIV infection:

Intuition and how much risk I am willing to take and usually by age. Guys my age are usually more conscious about safer sex even though we didn't live through the AIDS epidemic. (A 22-year-old participant)

Before we went to bed, we talked about [safer sex]. He said he was working at a medical centre for sexual transmitted diseases as a volunteer so I thought that he was kind of a safe man. (A 26-year-old participant)

Some participants also commented on using other social cues to discern the sero-status of a partner and assess their potential risk for HIV infection. For example, they interpreted that a man was 'safe' if he did not mention barebacking (anal sex without a condom): 'Well if a guy has experience of bare fucking or something else, I think he is very dangerous. And if a guy always mentions safe, safe . . . you know he is not so dangerous' (a 28-year-old participant).

When asked if they discussed safer sex with casual partners prior to engaging in anal sex, many participants said yes. Interestingly, however, when asked what they talked about with casual partners in terms of safer sex, these participants simply answered that they asked their partners if they had condoms and lubrications with them. The participants assumed that a man was 'safe' and had sufficient knowledge about safer sex practice if he had condoms and lubrications. Rarely, if ever, they discussed with their partners issues about safer sex practice such as how to properly put on a condom, how HIV was transmitted, and which types of condoms and lubrications should be used to prevent HIV infection. As one 22-year-old participant remarked, 'We don't talk about that, we talk about that when we are having sex . . . we aren't playing doctor and patients.' Similarly, a 26-year-old participant stated, 'The subject of HIV is rarely visited.'

Among the participants, there was also some discomfort discussing sex and safer sex with a partner: 'It was avoided at first; actually we didn't talk about it at all till it happened . . . I'd say we were both shy and cautious' (a 29-year-old participant). This

discomfort might have prevented the participants from negotiating safer sex with a partner (see Chng & Collins 2000; Poon & Ho 2002).

Clearly, participants knew that they should use condoms to protect themselves from HIV infection particularly when they engaged in anal sex with a casual partner. However, their perception of someone who was 'safe' might affect their decisions of safe sex practice:

I have done bareback . . . It was about a year and a half ago although there is no cum, just fucking . . . [with a] trusted partner, albeit a sex partner, a fuck buddy . . . um a friend. (A 34-year-old participant)

[Safe sex] is something I do talk about . . . 'do you have condom and lube ready?' [If] it is no, I walk out . . . if it is Russell Crowe, I stay . . . LOL [laugh out loud]. (A 22-year-old participant)

As Barry Adam *et al.* (2003) argue, unsafe sex is rather situational. People do not just make decisions of safe sex simply based on 'rational' knowledge but, rather, on a combination of factors such as emotional state, perception of risk, desirability of the partner, and other factors regarding self-worth such as age, race, class, education and body image.

Discussion

This study sought to understand the lived, psychosocial experience of Asian men who use gay chatrooms and, in so doing, to identify culturally specific HIV prevention strategies for this population. We discuss here the implication of the study while keeping in mind its limitations.

Limitations

Due to limited resources, the study has a small number of participants who are recruited through one website and most of whose ethnic background is Chinese. These factors may limit the transferability of this study. In fact, participants' experiences may differ from that of Asian men who frequently attend gay commercial venues such as dance clubs and bathhouses. The study also requires a certain degree of conventional and computer literacy in order to participate. This may have excluded potential participants who have difficulty expressing themselves through writing in English and those who are unfamiliar with or have limited access to the Internet.

Interviewing participants online through real-time chat also tended to be slower than face-to-face interviews and thus might have affected the way in which participants responded to our questions. For example, participants who typed slowly often gave short answers. In some cases, this made it difficult to fully explore the

issues we wanted to discuss during the interviews (Mann & Stewart 2000). Moreover, online interviewing limited the way in which participants expressed themselves: participants might have found it difficult to describe certain emotions through writing. Nor could we perceive participants' non-verbal cues (such as facial expressions) and feelings through changes in voice and intonation during the interviews. These factors might have affected our understanding of the data (Im & Chee 2001).

Implications of the Study

Analysis revealed some complex lived, psychosocial experiences of Asian men who use gay chatrooms in Toronto. As shown in the narratives, participants tended to be socially isolated; they often did not find that they 'fit in' in gay-oriented venues such as bars and bathhouses (which often cater to white men) and thus did not frequently visit these venues. Consequently, traditional outreach, commonly conducted in bars and bathhouses, may not be able to reach this population. Due to heterosexism, some participants experienced feelings of confusion about their same-sex desire and many were still in the 'closet'. There was also a lack of family and social support among participants (see also Ridge *et al.* 1999; Poon & Ho 2002). The Internet allowed participants to explore their same-sex attraction and seek social support with a sense of control, safety and anonymity (Hillier *et al.* 2001).

Participants' experiences of chatrooms reflect the common experience of social marginalization among Asian MSM in the mainstream gay community. As a result of the negative stereotypes about gay Asian men and the Western notion of ideal male beauty, participants were generally seen as unattractive and thus undesirable long-term or even sex partners (Ridge *et al.* 1999; Poon & Ho 2002). Consequently, they were often ignored by other users; many idealized white men and some internalized negative feelings about being gay and Asian. Recent research has pointed to an association between these experiences and HIV risk (Choi *et al.* 1999; Nemoto *et al.* 2003; Wilson & Yoshikawa 2004; Yoshikawa *et al.* 2004).

Boredom and loneliness, as participants identified, were the key factors motivating them to meet their cyber 'friends' offline in person. Due to inexperience in dating and in the gay community, feelings of isolation, and desire to date white men, in some cases, participants did not found mutual and equitable relationships with their cyber 'friends' when they met these 'friends' offline in person: they were persuaded (or some may say, used) for sex even though they might not want to. This has reflected the asymmetrical power relations between Asian men and white men. As Ridge *et al.* (1999, p. 60) write:

Men from Southeast Asia who are inexperienced with, and have not assimilated to the white middle-class culture, can be at a distinct power disadvantage in their sexual negotiations with Anglo men . . . When [older] Anglo men make sexual approaches, some men from Southeast Asian backgrounds have difficulties refusing

these advances, and their apparent passivity or ambivalence can be interpreted as consent for sex.

Moreover, Adam *et al.* (2003, p. 33) argue:

People who feel disadvantaged by their age, race, (lack of) attractiveness, gender, neediness, etc. appear to be vulnerable to 'trading off' safety for intimacy with a valued partner. Social hierarchies that prescribe who is more desirable and valuable in courting and sexual relationships create vulnerability.

However, further research is needed to illuminate our understanding of this issue.

It is clear from the analysis that some participants had formed a strong network with other users, in which they not only provided support to each other, but also reminded each other of safer sex practices and resisted the effects of stereotypes through identifying their common experiences as being gay and Asian. These networks, we think, could be valuable resources for service providers to promote psychological and sexual health and to help reduce social isolation among Asian men who use gay chatrooms as well. As previous research (Kelly 2000) has demonstrated, peer support programs have been found to significantly reduce HIV risk among young gay men. Service providers can recruit and train Asian users to provide peer support and empowerment AIDS education in gay chatrooms. However, to be effective, the education must not only focus on knowledge about HIV transmission and prevention, but must also facilitate a development of positive self-identity and discussion of issues about power, sexuality and Asian people in the context of AIDS (for example, how AIDS relates to different forms of oppression such as racism and homophobia and how these types of prejudice may contribute to high-risk sexual behaviour). Such discussions, as some authors have argued, may enable users to personalize this knowledge and develop communication and negotiation skills that facilitate self-efficacy to make the necessary behavioural choices to reduce HIV risk (see, for example, Cranston 1992; Hunter & Schaecher 1994; Carballo-Diéguez 1998).

As shown in the analysis, participants generally considered oral sex as safe sex and thus rarely, if ever, used condoms during oral sex with casual partners, in which they could potentially contract oral herpes, pharyngeal gonorrhoea and other STIs. This finding echoes previous studies, which found that STI infection is generally not a concern to many Asian MSM (Bhat *et al.* 1994; Poon *et al.* 2001). However, US research has reported a high rate of hepatitis B infection (35%) among Asian MSM (Seage *et al.* 1997) and the highest rate of increase of gonorrhoea among Asians and Pacific Islanders from 1997 to 1998 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2000). Also scientific evidence has shown that STIs facilitate HIV transmission and increase the possibility of HIV infection (see, for example, Wasserheit 1992; D'Adesky 1999). It is thus important for service providers to include information about STI transmission and prevention as part of the overall HIV prevention strategies for this population.

To reduce risk of HIV infection, some participants either refrained from sex or chose not to engage in anal intercourse with casual partners, an act which they considered sacred and existing only in long-term relationships (that often imply monogamy, intimacy, love and trust). These participants thus were not too concerned about safer sex practice. However, this assumption about relationships may make it difficult for them to negotiate safe sex with their steady partner. As Adam *et al.* (2003, pp. 13–14) put it:

Unprotected sexual practices may themselves come to be read as a primary sign of the special trust that partners in couple have for each other . . . thereby inhibiting partners from adopting protection lest it be read as an accusation of infidelity.

In fact, earlier research has found that young gay Asian men often experienced difficulty in negotiating safe sex with their steady partner (Choi *et al.* 1999; Poon & Ho 2002) and that some men in couples breached an agreement of ‘negotiated safety’ (in which partners in couples only have unprotected anal intercourse when they both are tested HIV negative and exclusively monogamous or have agreed to have safe sex outside of the relationships) and had unprotected anal intercourse outside of the relationships (Davidovich *et al.* 2000; Adam *et al.* 2003). Hence, service providers should develop a strategy to help Asian MSM to negotiate a clear and unambiguous agreement of ‘negotiated safety’ with their steady partner, and to ‘deal with issues of honesty, testing, trust and talk between men’ (Kippax *et al.* 1997, p. 197). Also important is to remind Asian MSM that ‘negotiated safety’ does not always protect them from HIV infection since they may still contract the disease through partners who falsely claim to be HIV negative or monogamous (Nemoto *et al.* 2003).

Clearly, participants were aware that they should use condoms when engaging in anal intercourse with a casual partner. However, some assumed that people with certain characteristics were less likely to be HIV positive and thus that having anal intercourse with these men would be ‘safe’. This assumption may undermine their judgement regarding safer sex practices. As Adam *et al.* (2003, p. 30) state:

Unsafe practices are often less a question of lack knowledge, attitude, or the disabling of reason, than a complex deployment of signs and interactions that must be addressed if HIV transmission is to be affected . . . Unprotected sex arises in a variety of disparate circumstances: as a resolution to condoms and erectile difficulties, through momentary lapses and trade offs, out of personal turmoil and depression, and as a by-product of strategies of disclosure and intuiting safety.

It is thus important for service providers not only to remind Asian MSM that no physical appearance can determine one’s HIV status, but also to help Asian MSM develop skills (such as assertiveness and safer sex negotiation) to address situations where they find it difficult to negotiate and practise safer sex (Choi *et al.* 1999; Poon & Ho 2002). This could be accomplished through role-playing such situations in public chatrooms, where users could read and partake the discussion.

Interestingly, participants in this study did not mention any substance use or found it an issue for them. This finding contradicts some US studies, which has shown that substance use was prevalent and associated with high-risk sex among Asian MSM (Choi *et al.* 1999; Nemoto *et al.* 2003). This discrepancy could be explained by the different recruitment methods between this study and the US studies. Participants in this study were recruited through gay chatrooms and did not frequently attend bars and dance clubs, where drugs and alcohol are not only easily obtainable but also a part of the culture. In contrast, participants in the US studies were recruited through gay-identified venues such as bars and dance clubs.

However, future research is needed to validate our findings in this study. Findings that merit further inquiry include: (1) how the Internet (more specifically chatrooms) may make Asian men vulnerable to being 'prey' for sexual exploration; (2) how meanings (discourses) of intimacy, love and trust affect their decisions of practising safe sex in relationships and how Asian men negotiate safety with their steady partner; (3) how Asian men negotiate safer sex with a casual partner who they met through chatrooms; (4) what are the similar and different experiences between those Asian men who use gay chatrooms and those who do not; and (5) how Asian men use the Internet as a medium to resist social oppression.

Notes

- [1] Portions of an earlier version of this paper were presented at the Asian & Pacific Islander Summit on HIV/AIDS Research, Oakland, California, USA, 15–17 November 2002.
- [2] These numbers are based on Statistics Canada categories of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Southeast Asian and Filipino.
- [3] The term 'Asian' is used to refer to people of East and Southeast Asian descent and is used interchangeably with the term 'East and Southeast Asian' in this paper.
- [4] Participants tended to use abbreviations when they typed and there were many spelling and typographical mistakes. To improve comprehension, we changed the abbreviations back to their full forms and corrected spelling and typographical mistakes without specifying these modifications in the text.

References

- Adam, B. D., Husbands, W., Murray, J. & Maxwell, J. (2003) *Renewing HIV Prevention for Gay and Bisexual Men: A Research Report on Safer Sex Practices among High-Risk Men and Men in Couples in Toronto*, University of Windsor and AIDS Committee of Toronto, Windsor and Toronto. Available at: <http://www.actorsonto.org/website/research.nsf/pages/renewinghivprevention>
- Anderson, K. & Jack, D. C. (1991) 'Learning to listen: interview techniques and analyses', in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, eds S. B. Gluck & D. Patai, Routledge, New York, pp. 11–27.
- Benotsch, E. G., Kalichman, S. & Cage, M. (2002) 'Men who have met sex partners via the Internet: prevalence, predictors, and implications for HIV prevention', *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, vol. 31, pp. 177–183.
- Bhat, A., Yee, W. & Koo, H. (1994) *Behind the Asian Mask: A Survey of Asian MSMs and HIV Awareness*, Asian Support—AIDS Project, Vancouver.

- Carballo-Diéguez, A. (1998) 'The challenge of staying HIV-negative for Latin American immigrants', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, vol. 8, pp. 61–82.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2000) 'Gonorrhoea—United States, 1998', *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 49, pp. 538–542.
- Charmaz, K. (2000) 'Ground theory: objectivist and constructivist methods', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln 2nd edn, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Chng, C. L. & Collins, J. R. (2000) 'Providing culturally competent HIV prevention programs', *American Journal of Health Studies*, vol. 16, pp. 24–33.
- Choi, K. H., Coates, T. J., Catania, J. A., Lew, S. & Chow, P. (1995) 'High HIV risk among gay Asian and Pacific Islander men in San Francisco' [letters to the editor], *AIDS*, vol. 9, pp. 306–307.
- Choi, K. H., Kumekawa, E., Dang, Q., Kegeles, S. M., Hays, R. B. & Stall, R. (1999) 'Risk and protective factors affecting sexual behavior among young Asian and Pacific Islander men who have sex with men: implications for HIV prevention', *Journal of Sex Education and Therapy*, vol. 24, pp. 47–55.
- Cranston, K. (1992) 'HIV education for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth: personal risk, personal power, and the community of conscience', *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 22, pp. 247–259.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- D'Adesky, A. C. (1999) 'HIV's hidden partner: stopping STI's is critical to HIV control', *HIV Plus*, March, pp. 13–14, 16, 18–19 and 23.
- Davidovich, U., de Wit, J. B. F. & Stroebe, W. (2000) 'Assessing sexual risk behaviour of young gay men in primary relationships: the incorporation of negotiated safety and negotiated safety compliance', *AIDS*, vol. 14, pp. 701–706.
- Davis, M., Hart, G., Bolding, G., Sherr, L. & Elford, J. (2003) *Appraising Internet Relay Chat as a Technique for Conducting Qualitative Interviews about HIV Risk*. Paper presented at the STD/HIV Prevention on the Internet Conference, Washington, DC, 25–27 August.
- Eaves, Y. D. (2001) 'A synthesis technique for grounded theory data analysis', *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 35, pp. 654–663.
- Elford, J., Bolding, G. & Sherr, L. (2001) 'Seeking sex on the Internet and sexual risk behaviour among gay men using London gyms', *AIDS*, vol. 15, pp. 1409–1415.
- Eysenbach, G. & Till, J. (2001) 'Ethical issues in qualitative research on Internet communities', *British Medical Journal*, vol. 323, pp. 1103–1105.
- Eysenbach, G. & Wyatt, J. (2002) 'Facilitating research', in *Internet and Medicine*, ed. B. C. McKenzie 3rd edn, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 221–225.
- Fung, R. (1996) 'Looking for my penis: the eroticized Asian in gay video porn', in *Asian American Sexualities: Dimensions of the Gay & Lesbian Experience*, ed. R. Leong, Routledge, New York, pp. 181–198.
- Health Canada (2001) *HIV and AIDS in Canada: Surveillance Report to December 31, 2000*, Population and Public Health Branch, Ottawa (Division of HIV/AIDS Epidemiology and Surveillance, Bureau of HIV/AIDS, STD and TB).
- Hillier, L., Kurdas, C. & Horsley, P. (2001) 'It's Just Easier': *The Internet as a Safety-Net for Same Sex Attracted Young People* [online]. Available at: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/ssay/>
- Ho, P. S. Y. & Tsang, A. K. T. (2000) 'Negotiating anal intercourse in inter-racial gay relationships in Hong Kong', *Sexualities*, vol. 3, pp. 299–323.
- Hunter, J. & Schaecher, R. (1994) 'AIDS prevention for lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents', *Families in Society*, vol. 75, pp. 346–354.
- Im, E. O. & Chee, W. (2001) 'A feminist critique on the use of the Internet in nursing research', *Advances in Nursing Science*, vol. 23, pp. 67–82.
- Kelly, J. A. (2000) 'HIV prevention interventions with gay or bisexual men and youth', *AIDS*, vol. 14, pp. S34–S39.

- Kippax, S., Nobel, J., Prestage, G., Crawford, J. M., Campbell, D., Baxter, D. & Cooper, D. (1997) 'Sexual negotiation in the AIDS era: negotiated safety revised', *AIDS*, vol. 11, pp. 191–197.
- Lincoln, Y. S. (1995) 'Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 1, pp. 275–289.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Mann, C. & Stewart, F. (2000) *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research: A Handbook for Researching Online*, Sage, London.
- McCaskell, T. (1998) 'Towards a sexual economy of rice queenliness: lust, power, and racism', in *Explorations into Gay Asian Culture+Politics*, ed. S. Cho Rice, Queer Press, Toronto, pp. 45–48.
- Nemoto, T., Wong, F. Y., Ching, A., Chng, C. L., Bouey, P., Henrickson, M. & Sember, R. E. (1998) 'HIV seroprevalence, risk behaviours, and cognitive factors among Asian and Pacific Islander American men who have sex with men: a summary and critique of empirical studies and methodological issues', *AIDS Education and Prevention*, vol. 10, pp. 31–47.
- Nemoto, T., Operario, D., Soma, T., Bao, D., Vajrabukka, A. & Crisostomo, V. (2003) 'HIV risk and prevention among Asian/Pacific Islander men who have sex with men: listen to our stories', *AIDS Education and Prevention*, vol. 15, pp. 7–20.
- Poon, M. K. L. (2000) 'Inter-racial same-sex abuse: the vulnerability of gay men of Asian descent in relationships with Caucasian men', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, vol. 11, pp. 39–67.
- Poon, M. K. L. & Ho, P. T. T. (2002) 'A qualitative analysis of cultural and social vulnerabilities to HIV infection among gay, lesbian, and bisexual Asian youth', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, vol. 14, pp. 43–78.
- Poon, M. K. L., Ho, P. T. T. & Wong, J. P. H. (2001) 'Developing a comprehensive AIDS prevention outreach program: a need assessment survey of MSM of East and Southeast Asian descent who visit bars and/or bath houses in Toronto', *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, vol. 10, pp. 25–39.
- Ridge, D., Hee, A. & Minichiello, V. (1999) "Asian" men on the scene: challenges to "gay communities", *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 36, pp. 43–68.
- Sanitioso, R. (1999) 'A social psychological perspective on HIV/AIDS and gay or homosexually active Asian men', *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 36, pp. 69–85.
- Seage, G. R., Mayer, K. H., Lenderking, W. R., Wold, C., Gross, M., Goldstein, R., Cai, B., Heeren, T., Hingson, R. & Holmberg, S. (1997) 'HIV and hepatitis B infection and risk behavior in young gay and bisexual men', *Public Health Reports*, vol. 112, pp. 158–167.
- Singer, S. M., Willms, D. G., Adrien, A., Baxter, J., Brabazon, C., Leaune, V., Godin, G., Maticka-Tyndale, E. & Cappon, P. (1996) 'Many voices—sociocultural results of the ethnocultural communities facing AIDS study in Canada', *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, vol. 87, pp. S26–S32.
- Statistics Canada (2001) *2001 Community Profiles*, Statistics Canada, Ottawa. Available at: <http://www12.statcan.ca/english>
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1994) 'Grounded theory methodology: an overview', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 273–285.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* 2nd edn, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Takagi, D. (1996) 'Maiden voyage: excursion into sexuality and identity politics in Asian America', in *Asian American Sexualities: Dimensions of the Gay & Lesbian Experience*, ed. R. Leong, Routledge, New York, pp. 22–35.
- Toronto Three Cities Project (2000) *Gay Health Promotion in the Context of HIV Prevention*, Technical Report, Toronto Three Cities Project, Toronto.

- Trochim, W. (2000) *The Research Methods Knowledge Base* 2nd edn, Atomic Dog Publishing, Cincinnati, OH.
- Tsang, D. C. (1996) 'Notes on queer "N" Asian: virtual sex', in *Asian American Sexualities: Dimensions of the Gay & Lesbian Experience*, ed. R. Leong, Routledge, New York, pp. 153–162.
- Wasserheit, J. N. (1992) 'Epidemiological synergy: interrelationships between human immunodeficiency virus infection and other sexually transmitted diseases', *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*, vol. 9, pp. 71–77.
- Wat, E. C. (2002) *The Making of a Gay Asian Community: An Oral History of Pre-AIDS Los Angeles*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD.
- Weatherburn, P., Hickson, F. & Reid, D. (2003) *Net Benefits: Gay Men's Use of the Internet and Other Settings Where HIV Preventions Occurs*, Sigma Research (1872956688). Available at:<http://www.sigmaresearch.org.uk/reports.html>
- Wilson, P. A. & Yoshikawa, H. (2004) 'Experiences of and responses to social discrimination among Asian and Pacific Islander gay men: their relationship to HIV risk', *AIDS Education and Prevention*, vol. 16, pp. 68–83.
- Yi, J. K. (1998) 'Vietnamese American College Students' knowledge and attitudes toward HIV/AIDS', *Journal of American College Health*, vol. 47, pp. 37–42.
- Yoshikawa, H., Wilson, P. A. D., Chae, D. H. & Cheng, J. F. (2004) 'Do family and friendship network protect against the influence of discrimination on mental health and HIV risk among Asian and Pacific Islander gay men?', *AIDS Education and Prevention*, vol. 16, pp. 84–100.