

# Does Sex Partner Concurrency Mediate the Association between Experiences of Homophobia and Poverty and Unprotected Sex among Men Who Have Sex with Men in Shanghai, China?

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## Background

- At the end of 2005, 650,000 individuals in China had been infected with HIV, over four times the cumulative number of confirmed cases (141,241).
- Men who have sex with men (MSM) in China are at high risk for HIV.
- Social discrimination has been shown to affect various health outcomes.
- However, little is known about mechanisms (e.g., sex partner concurrency) through which experiences of homophobia and poverty operate in determining HIV risk among MSM in China.

## Research Objective

To examine the mediating role of “sex partner concurrency” (sexual partnerships overlapping in time) in explaining the association between experiences of homophobia and poverty among Chinese MSM

## Research Methods

- Recruited study participants from 9/2004 to 6/2005, using a chain-referral sampling method
- Eligible if: male sex, at least 18 years of age, Shanghai residence, and sex with men
- Completed a face-to-face interviewer-administered questionnaire

## Results

### Recruitment

- 535 men screened
- 515 met eligibility criteria
- 477 (93%) agreed to participate

## Results

### Demographic Characteristics

Mean age in years (range, 18-56)	28
Marital status	
Never married	78%
Currently married	13%
Separated/divorced	9%
Education	
Junior high school or less	39%
Senior high school	35%
College graduate	26%
Self-reported sexual orientation	
Gay	57%
Bisexual	38%
Straight or undecided	5%
Had a Shanghai household registration card, or <i>hukou</i>	22%

### Sexual Behaviors, Past Six Months

Number of partners	
Median Number of male anal sex partners (range, 0-150)	2
Median number female anal/vaginal sex partners (range, 0-8)	0
Partner type	
Had a steady male partner	27%
Had a steady female partner	21%
Concurrency	
Had concurrent male partners	33%
Had concurrent male and female partners	17%
Unprotected intercourse	
Unprotected anal sex with men	57%
Unprotected anal or vaginal sex with both men and women	13%

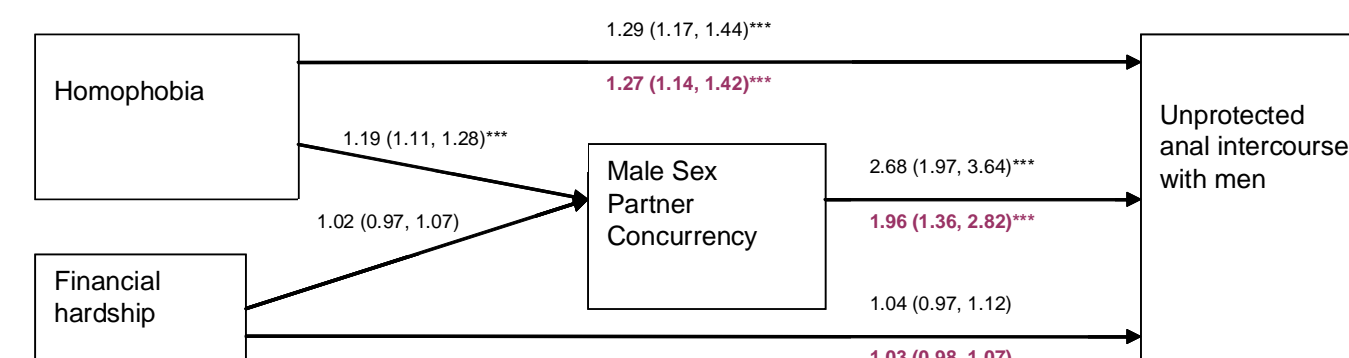
### Lifetime Experiences of Homophobia

Any lifetime experiences of homophobia	23%
Had lost his friends because of his homosexuality	16%
Had not been accepted by his family because of his homosexuality	7%
Had lost a job or career opportunity for being homosexual	5%
Had lost a place to live for being homosexual	4%
Had been hit or beaten up for being homosexual	3%
Had been kicked out of school for being homosexual	1%

### Experiences of Financial Hardship, Past Six Months

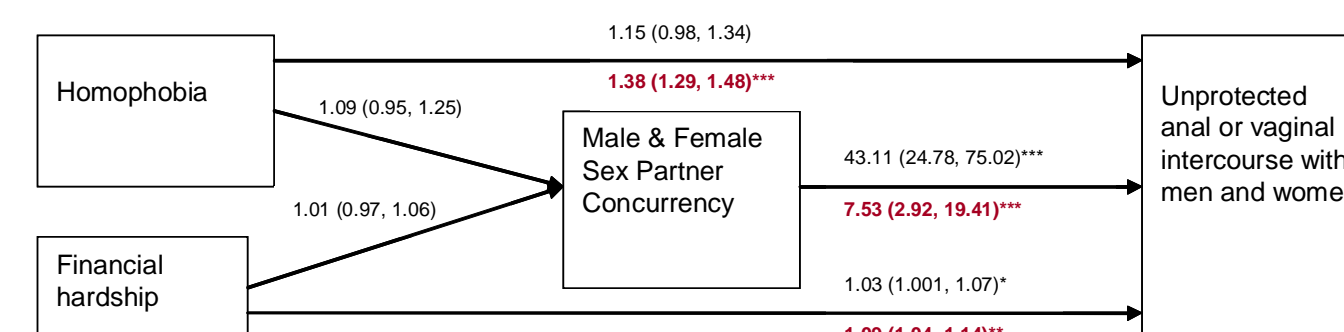
Any experiences of financial hardship	61%
Did not have enough money for food or housing	21%
Had to borrow money for food or housing	26%
Had to look for work	44%
Had to find a place to live	30%

Figure 1. A Mediation Model for Having Unprotected Anal Intercourse with Men: Results of Bivariate and Multivariate Analyses<sup>§</sup>



<sup>§</sup>Odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals obtained from bivariate and multivariate analyses are reported above and below arrows, respectively; multivariate analyses controlled for age, marital status, education, having a Shanghai residence card, sexual orientation, number of male sex partners, and having a steady male partner; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

Figure 2. A Mediation Model for Having Unprotected Anal or Vaginal Intercourse with Men and Women: Results of Bivariate and Multivariate Analyses<sup>§</sup>



<sup>§</sup>Odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals obtained from bivariate and multivariate analyses are reported above and below arrows, respectively; multivariate analyses controlled for age, marital status, education, having a Shanghai residence card, sexual orientation, number of male sex partners, number of female sex partners, having a steady male partner, and having a steady female partner; \* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

## Conclusions

- Experiences of homophobia and financial hardship were highly prevalent among MSM in Shanghai.
- Sex partner concurrency did not mediate the association between experiences of homophobia, financial hardship, and unprotected sex among these men.
- We found a direct relationship between experiences of homophobia and unprotected anal sex, and this relationship remained strong when we controlled for male partner concurrency.
- Experiences of financial hardship were not related to either male partner concurrency or having unprotected anal sex.
- Experiences of homophobia, experiences of financial hardship, and male and female partner concurrency were independent factors associated with having unprotected sex with men and women.
- These results suggest that stigmatization issues and sex partner concurrency should be addressed to help reduce sexual risk for HIV among MSM in China.

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