

From Crisis To Rebirth: Exploring Resiliency Responses Of Asian MSM In Dealing With Testing HIV Positive

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Concurrent Session:

Newcomers, Migrant Workers & Minorities: Experiences of Risk & Resilience

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Asian Community AIDS Services
Supporting Our Community, Caring For Our Future



AMP2R
Community Based Research to
Explore How Asian MSM
Deal with Major Life Transitions.

Acknowledgement

- ▶ Paying respects to the traditional lands of
The Mississaugas of the New Credit
which are on.

Acknowledgement

- ▶ All our research participants
- ▶ Our research team
- ▶ Funding Partner: CIHR

No Conflict of Interest



Our Research Team

▶ Principal Investigators:

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- **Richard Utama** (Asian Community AIDS Services),
- **Maurice Poon** (York University)

▶ Co-investigators:

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- Josephine Wong (Ryerson University),
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- James Murray (AIDS Bureau, Ontario Ministry of Health)

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Our Research Team

► Advisory Committee:

- Peter Ho (Regent Park Community Health Centre),
- Darrell Tan (St. Michael's Hospital),
- Kenneth Fung (University Health Network),
- David Yeh (Central Toronto Youth Services),
- Kenta Asakura (University of Toronto),
- Okjn Ohinoo (Queer Asian Youth),
- Aries Cheung (Asian Community AIDS Services),
- Hywell Tuscano (CATIE),
- Kenneth Poon (Asian Community AIDS Services),
- Andrew Miao (Asian Community AIDS Services)

Background

- ▶ Literature suggests that Asian & Pacific Islander MSM has similar level of risk behaviors as other MSM yet the HIV prevalence is lower..... (Wei, et. al)
- ▶ Most research on MSM and Asian MSM have focused on risks and challenges vs. resiliencies and strengths
- ▶ Through needs identified via community health promotion forum and research think tank, Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS) developed the community-based research study: **Asian Men Pathways to Resiliency (AMP2R)**, funded by **CIHR CBR Catalyst Grant**

Our Project: Asian MSM Pathways to Resiliency (AMP2R)

- ▶ Key Research questions:
 - ▶ What are the critical life events that impact the sexual health of Asian MSM
 - ▶ What affect resiliency responses to these life events/challenges
 - ▶ How can we change our practices and policies to improve the sexual health of Asian and other racialized MSMs

Our Participants

- ▶ Age: 20-29 (25), 30-39 (9), 40-49 (10), 50-59 (5), 60+ (1)
- ▶ Born in Canada: 11; Born outside Canada: 40 (China/HK/Macau, Philippines)
- ▶ Years in Canada: less than 1 yr (3), 1-5 yrs (5), 6-20 yrs (12), 20+yrs (15)
- ▶ Immigration: Citizen (25), Landed/PR (9), Students/Other TRP (6)

Method

- ❖ *Resiliency: "Our ability to cope with life events and recover from adversity"*
- ❖ **Six focus groups:**
 - ❖ 5 MSM groups: (N=51)
 - ❖ 3 mixed MSMs
 - ❖ 1 MSM Youth (Age <29)
 - ❖ **1 PHA (12 Asian PHA MSM)**
 - ❖ 1 Service provider Focus group (N=12)

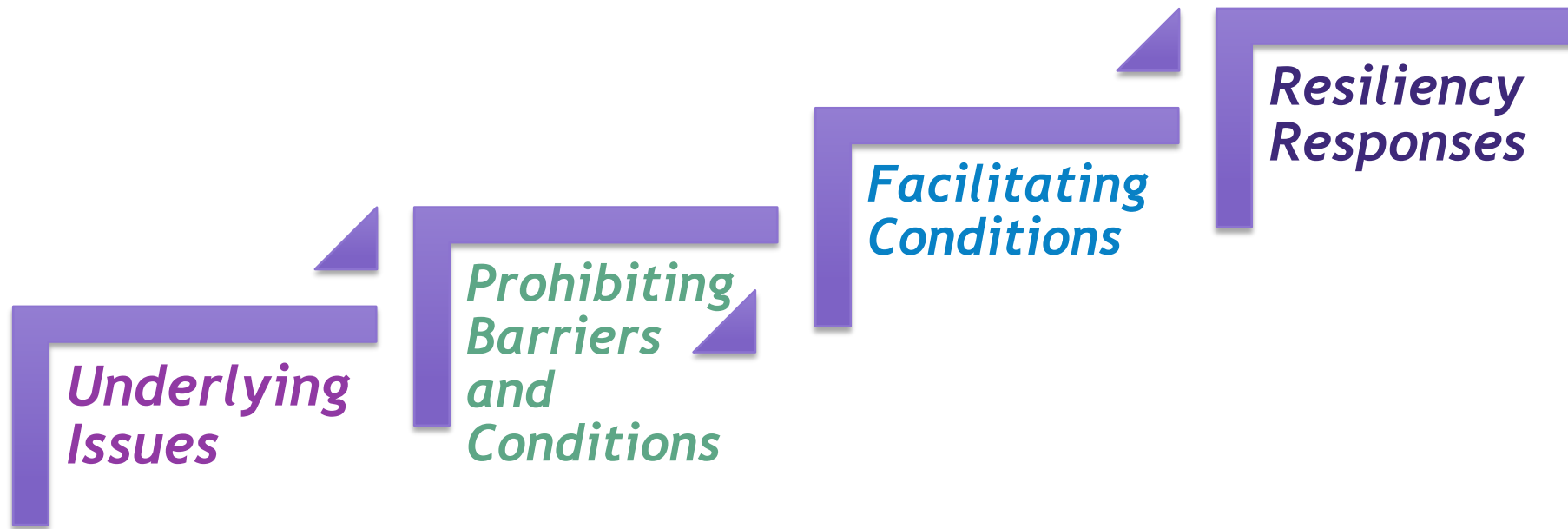
Our findings: Key Critical Life Events that Impact Sexual Health of Asian MSMs

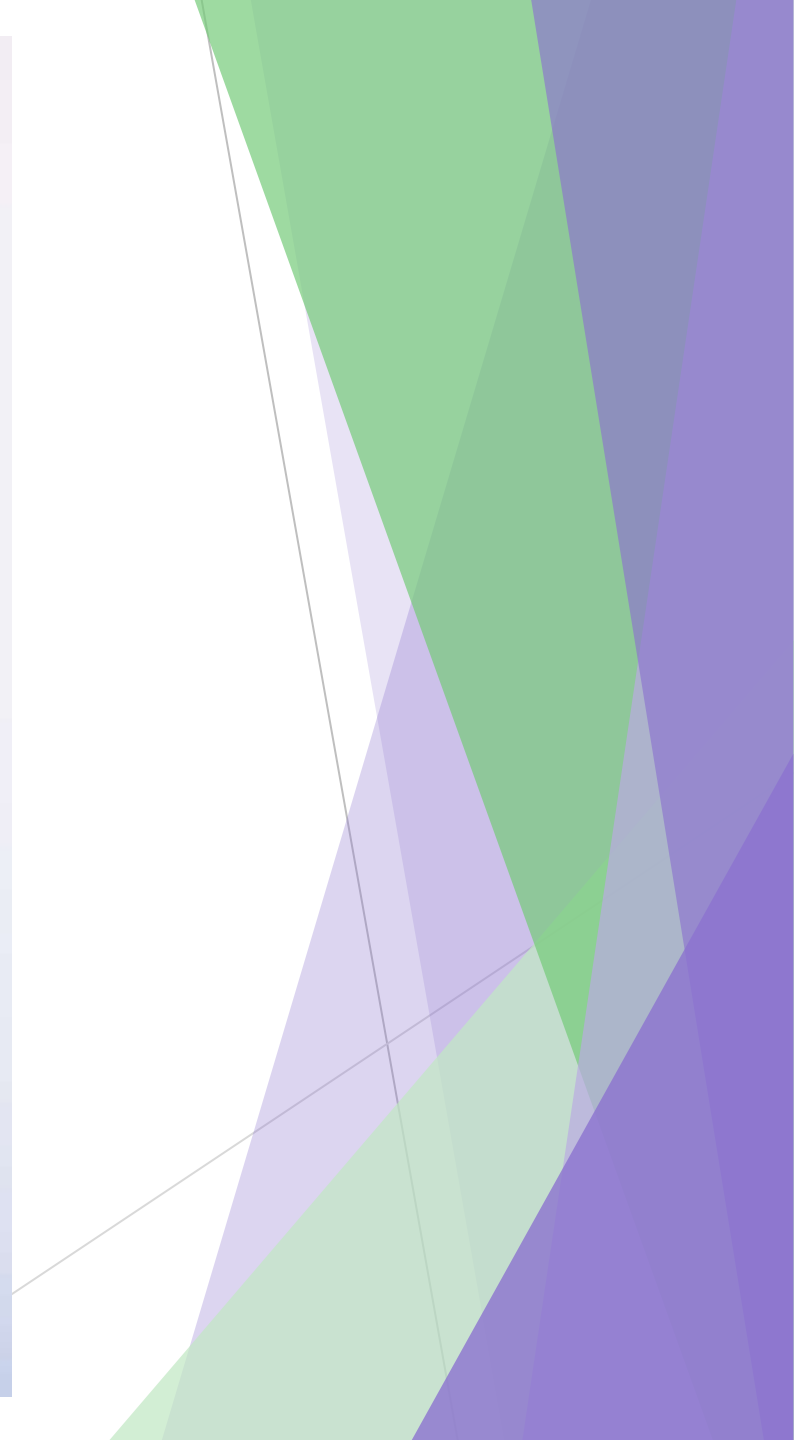
- Coming Out
- Migration
- Sex, Dating & Relationships
- **Experience with HIV**
- Aging as MSM/Aging as PHA

Focus: Testing HIV Positive

- ▶ Asian MSM often face challenges and barriers related to cultural and family values opposing their sexual identities.
- ▶ For Asian MSM PHAs, being HIV+ further complicates their social location and minority status in society.
- ▶ From testing positive to accepting their identity as Asian MSM PHAs, various negative and positive conditions contribute to how well this population adjust to their HIV diagnosis and develop resilient responses in the process.

A model for understanding Resilience: Process of Testing HIV+ to Resiliency





Results: Key challenges

Focus group participants revealed that upon testing HIV+, **key challenges** included dealing with:

- ▶ The shock/trauma related to testing positive,
- ▶ the threat of double disclosure of one's HIV and MSM status,
- ▶ the fear of death and concerns about one's health, and
- ▶ treatment side effects.

Results

▶ Testing HIV+: Key Challenges

*“Actually I am [an] HIV immigrant. I am very lucky. Just at the end of the...I was in school. But at the end of the test, the physical examination, **I found out I am HIV.** And I think, **my life just stop here. My dream stopped, my life stopped.**”*

-Asian PHA Immigrant from Mainland China

Results: Negative complicating factors

- ▶ Not knowing available resources/services,
- ▶ Misinformation: health, legal etc.
- ▶ Culturally incompetent healthcare providers, and
- ▶ Concurrent stressors: migration, other losses
- ▶ Sex-negative culture in own ethno-racial communities
- ▶ Social isolation

Results

▶ Negative Complicating Factors

*“Another thing I forgot to mention is that **there was like a compounded moment to me** because I went to my family doctor to find out about my HIV status. The first thing my doctor said was, **“You have to tell your family, and you have to bring everybody here because we have to give them an HIV test.”** So I have to tell my whole family. And my family doctor said, **“Probably everybody will have to have it done, with the exception with the parents. Sisters, brother-in-law, everybody will have to come in.”**”*

- Asian PHA Participant from Hong Kong

Results: Positive facilitating conditions:

- ▶ Awareness of available resources/services
- ▶ Access to culturally competent service providers
- ▶ Being assisted to address their most immediate needs, and
- ▶ Supportive family and friends
- ▶ Knowing other PHAs

Results

► Positive Facilitating Conditions

*“So when I got tested, I was shocked but I was calm. **So I got the information to some HIV clinic, so I made a phone call to [clinic], to find my doctor.** And since then, I start meeting him for a few sessions, to discuss HIV, medication, whether or not to go on medication, talk about a lot of things, right. But HIV is not new to me. I learnt a lot about HIV at school, in my job. I know HIV is all about. **So I better consult my doctor and decided to go on medication right away.** I am happy, my health is totally fine. ”*

-Asian PHA Participant from China

Results: Resiliency Responses:

- ▶ Connecting to culturally and linguistically appropriate services
- ▶ Ability to disclose and access support
- ▶ Treatment literacy
- ▶ Prioritizing self care
- ▶ Prioritizing on practical needs (e.g. health care, treatment, financial assistance) vs. negative emotions
- ▶ Migration to safe/supportive environment
- ▶ Reframe testing HIV+ into an opportunity for growth, new beginning or rebirth.

Results

▶ Resiliency Responses

*“My message is basically very simple. Don’t forget your roots. Don’t forget your culture, don’t forget your loved ones. But at the same time, while maintaining your roots, maintaining your culture, your loved ones, you know, **always put yourself first so that you don’t become a victim.** Stop being a victim and start take control of your life. **Put yourself first so that you can take care of your loved ones better.**”*

- Southeast Asian PHA

Preliminary Recommendations

▶ Individual level:

- Need to focus on health and service literacy, and culturally sensitive ways to affirm sexual identity and HIV+ diagnosis;

▶ Service provider level:

- develop cultural competent skills to facilitate effective access to services, and appropriate disclosure;

▶ Systemic level:

- consciousness raising in the broader Asian communities, and development of culturally appropriate safe spaces for Asian PHAs

Parting Thought on Resiliency

*“...what I had learnt from this event [testing HIV+] is that I became stronger emotionally and... psychologically as well. I felt like I saw that moment as **a chance of being reborn. A rebirth.**”*

Asian PHA male



Contact Us

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