ABSTRACT. This study explored associations of life satisfaction with personality traits, life events, and social support among 187 Chinese gay men in Hong Kong. In general, participants were modestly satisfied with various aspects of their lives. Findings from a hierarchical regression analysis indicated that a high level of life satisfaction of Chinese gay men was related to weak borderline personality traits, disclosure of homosexual sexual orientation, and gay peer support. Results also showed that there was no interaction effect between personality and psychosocial variables in affecting life satisfaction. Limitations and implications of this study were also discussed.

KEY WORDS: Chinese gay men, Chinese life satisfaction, borderline personality.

Recent studies have suggested that life satisfaction is reciprocally affected by personality traits and psychosocial variables of life events and social support (Headey and Wearing, 1989; Diener, 1996; Lu, 1999). According to this disposition-environment conceptual framework, personality traits predispose kinds of life events one encounters as well as influence one’s coping resources and styles. In turn, significant life events and social support produce substantial and lasting impact on one’s personality. Research on various components of this conceptual framework has yielded encouraging findings. For example, personality traits of extraversion and neuroticism (DeNeve and Cooper, 1998; Diener and Lucus, 1999) and attributional style (Furnham and Cheng, 2000; Cheng and Furnham, 2001) are found to associate with life satisfaction, happiness, or mental health. People who have greater social support tend to cope better with stress and demonstrate better psychological health (Diener, 1996; Lu et al., 1997; Myers, 1999). Compared to personality factors, types of life events are sometimes found to be better predictor of variations in life satisfaction across time (Headey and Wearing, 1989; Ormel and Schaufeli, 1991).

There is a paucity of studies on life satisfaction of the gay population, as previous research tends to focus on psychological distress in relation to homosexual sexual identity (Lock and Hans, 1999; Rosario et al., 2002). Sources of gay people’s distress include
sexual orientation discrimination and victimization, a sense of differ-

teness, and a lack of social support (Landolt and Dutton, 1997; 

D’Augelli et al., 2002). Recent research has also shown that border-

tline personality organization is more prevalent among homosexual 

than heterosexual populations (Silverstein, 1988; Landolt and Dutton, 

1997), and this may be related to gay people’s experiences of dis-

crimination and their gradually internalized homophobia (D’Augelli 

et al., 2002). Despite these stressors, gay people’s coming out expe-

riences, i.e., self-identification and disclosure of homosexual sexual 

orientation, are often linked to positive self-concept as well as psy-

chological (Savin-Williams, 1990; Rosario et al., 2001) and physical 

health (Cole et al., 1996). Furthermore, support from gay community 

groups is also related to gay people’s self-acceptance and percep-

tion of others’ acceptance of their homosexual sexual orientation, 

which in turn is related to psychological well-being (McKirnan et al., 

1995).

**Purposes of the Present Study**

Homosexuality in Chinese societies has previously been regarded as 
a mental illness, a criminal offence, and a violation of tradition cul-
tural values. With rapid social changes and westernization, there are 
gradual changes in lives of gay people in contemporary Chinese soci-
eties. Chinese are now more open to sexual exploration as in premarital 

sex and homosexuality (Tang et al., 1997). In Hong Kong, decriminal-

ization and anti-discrimination laws in relation to homosexuality have 

been enacted since the 1990s. Homosexuality is no longer regarded as a 

form of mental disorder according to the current psychiatric diagnostic 

manual. There is also an increasing proliferation of gay support groups 
in Hong Kong.

This study aimed to examine whether or not the disposition-
environment conceptual framework was applicable in understanding 
life satisfaction of Chinese gay men in Hong Kong. Based on this 
conceptual framework, it was hypothesized that personality traits, dis-
closure of homosexual sexual orientation, and gay peer support would 
be related to life satisfaction. Specifically, a higher level of life sat-
isfaction would be related to fewer borderline personality features, 
greater disclosure of homosexual sexual orientation, and a higher level 
of perceived support from gay support groups.