NO SAFE HAVEN
A Review on Elder Abuse in Chinese Families

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This review summarizes the literature on aging and elder abuse in contemporary Chinese societies. There is evidence that the younger generation of Chinese is less adherent to traditional Confucian principles of filial piety, and elderly Chinese are no longer guaranteed prestige, power, and care in the family. Carers of elderly Chinese also experience caregiver burden and are frequently caught in a caring dilemma. Furthermore, elderly Chinese often report distressful adjustment in their older age. Available studies indicate that elder abuse in the family does exist in Chinese societies, and various forms of elder abuse as identified by Western countries are also present. Risk factors and negative impacts of Chinese elder abuse resonate with those found in Western countries. In particular, elderly people's increasing dependence on their adult offspring may make them more vulnerable to the latter's abusive behaviors. Research, practical, and policy implications of this review are also discussed.

Key words: Chinese elder abuse, Chinese family violence, Chinese aging

FOLLOWING THE IDENTIFICATION of spouse and child abuse, the family as a safe haven for its members can no longer be taken for granted (Koss et al., 1994; Straus & Gelles, 1992; Wolfner & Gelles, 1993). Both official and unofficial statistics have shown that not only spouses and children are victims of family violence; elderly people also experience different forms of abuse by their family members. Since the reporting of the first case of "granny bashing" in Great Britain (Burston, 1975), increasing attention has been paid to understanding and preventing the phenomenon. Various theories have been proposed to explain why elder abuse occurs (Anetzbergen, 1987; Kosberg, 1983; Pillemer & Wolf, 1986) as well as to identify factors predictive of its occurrence (Baron & Welty, 1996; Bennett & Kingston, 1993; P. N. Chen, Bell, Dolinsky, Doyle, & Dunn, 1981; Eastman, 1984; Giordano & Giordano, 1984; Harris, 1996; Kosberg, 1998; Lachs, Williams, O'Brien, Hurst, & Horwitz, 1997; Pillemer, 1985; Pillemer & Finkel, 1989; Fritchard, 1992). Notwithstanding that elder abuse occurs at home and in the community, the present review focuses on abusive behaviors committed against the elderly people by their family members.

Despite increasing interest in elder abuse across countries, this phenomenon is relatively unexplored in Chinese societies. Partly relating