BRIEF COMMUNICATION

ADOLESCENT ABUSE IN HONG KONG CHINESE FAMILIES

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INTRODUCTION

CHILD ABUSE RESEARCH in both Western and Chinese societies has typically focused on children aged 16 or below who are vulnerable to various types of parental abuse with their small physical stature and dependency status (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994; Ima & Hohm, 1991; Wu, 1981). Studies on parental abuse toward adolescents are scarce, although researchers have argued that adolescents are also at high risks for abuse (Garbarino & Gilliam, 1980; Olsen & Holmes, 1986; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; Williamson, Borduin, & Howe, 1991). For example, Wauchope and Straus (1992) found that about 33% of the surveyed parents reported using physical punishment on their adolescent child. From a developmental perspective, adolescents strive to become independent from their parents and begin to establish their own identity outside the family. Parents on the other hand, may not fully understand the developmental changes of their older children and respond to the changes with strict discipline. Thus, the parent-child relationship during adolescence is particularly strained. Williamson and colleagues (1991) indicated that adolescent physical abuse is linked to rigidity in family relationships, poor maternal understanding of child developmental skills, and adolescent externalizing behaviors. Moreover, adolescent abuse may go unreported or misclassified because abuse of older children is often masked within other problems such as parent-child conflict, running away, and delinquency (Olsen & Holmes, 1986).

The present study aims to explore adolescent abuse in Hong Kong Chinese families. The term adolescent abuse is broadly defined to include physical, psychological, and emotional abuse of adolescents by their parents. Sexual abuse, though a form of adolescent abuse, will not be examined in the present study. This study will explore the extent of parental abuse toward adolescents in a college sample in Hong Kong. In addition, the associations between

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