

Personality Characteristics of Chinese Male Batterers: An Exploratory Study of Women's Reports From a Refugee Sample for Battered Women in Hong Kong

Ko Ling Chan, PhD, and Douglas A. Brownridge, PhD

This study examined the personality characteristics of Chinese male batterers in a cohort of 210 Chinese battered women drawn from a refuge in Hong Kong. Participants were interviewed using a standard questionnaire to examine the prevalence and incidence of violence they experienced. The incidence of battering in the preceding year was compared against the characteristics of male batterers using independent *t* tests. Logistic regression was performed with the personality characteristics and battering. The results showed that a number of personality characteristics, in particular

poor anger management and approval of the use of violence, were more frequent among batterers who were physically assaultive toward their partners. The findings of this study suggested the possibility of an association between child abuse and battering. The results have important implications for interventions with batterers in terms of the assessment and provision of batterer intervention programs.

Keywords: wife abuse; battering; child abuse; risk factors; dominance; Chinese

What kind of men will use violence against their partners? How can men's violence be stopped or prevented? These are the major questions that have been frequently asked by policy makers, researchers, and practitioners. Theories about and research into partner violence have attempted to identify causes or potential risk factors of violence. However the subject is complicated by a number of methodological considerations including the heterogeneity of potential perpetrators, the focus of the research (e.g., physical abuse, sexual abuse, etc.), the methodologies used, and the participants involved (Saunders, 1992; Stuart & Munroe, 1995; Tolman & Bennett, 1990). For example, in a meta-analysis of sex differences in physical aggression, it was found that

act-based measures, such as the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS), and meaning-based measures showed conflicting results with respect to sex differences in physical aggression toward partners (Archer, 2000). When measures were based on acts, women were significantly more likely than men to have used physical aggression toward their partners. However, when measures were based on the physical consequences of aggression, men were more likely than women to have injured their partners. In Archer's (2000) study, self-reports were found to indicate less use of physical aggression than partner reports. In addition to measurement issues, Johnson (1995) has argued that disparate results with respect to sex differences in violence can occur depending on the sample studied. Samples from shelters or batterers in court-ordered treatment programs find that women are the primary victims, whereas community samples tend to find that women perpetrate as much or more violence than men. Johnson reasoned that these ostensibly contradictory findings occurred because each data source contained different forms of violence. According to Johnson, the former results are a consequence of such samples' primarily containing patriarchal terrorists

From the Department of Social Work & Social Administration, University of Hong Kong (KLC), and the Department of Family Social Sciences and the Arthur V. Mauro Center for Peace and Justice, University of Manitoba (DAB). Honorary professor, University of Hong Kong (DAB).

Address correspondence to: Dr. Ko Ling Chan, Department of Social Work and Social Administration, University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong; e-mail: eklchan@hkucc.hku.hk.

(batterers) and the latter's primarily containing cases of common-couple violence. Research has also suggested that cross-cultural differences may be another source of bias in reporting physical aggression. In a cross-cultural analysis of extant data, Archer (2006) found that women are more likely to be victimized by their partner in societies that are more collectivist and in which women are less empowered; sexist attitudes and relative approval of wife beating were also associated with women's victimization. Such methodological factors are important considerations for the current study, which examines male battering in a clinical sample of Chinese women in Hong Kong.

The Relevance of a Psychological Approach for Understanding Battering

Given that the focus of the current study is on battering, the psychological approach is an appropriate perspective for this study. This approach suggests that battering is caused by a psychological abnormality (Stith & Straus, 1995), mental illness, and/or one or more personality defects (Miller & Wellford, 1997). Current research suggests that batterers may demonstrate more psychopathology, particularly features of personality disorder and negative psychological traits (Ammerman & Hersen, 1990). Past research has focused mainly on two dimensions: personality traits and disorders as well as alcohol and drug use (Roberts, 1987; Stith & Straus, 1995). A perpetrator's personality characteristics are regarded as the chief determinants of battering (Stith & Straus, 1995). Previous studies have reported that male batterers display a chronic and moderately severe level of personality dysfunction (Beasley & Stoltenberg, 1992), marked borderline personality disorder, alcohol and drug dependence (Roberts, 1987), and attachment anger (Dutton, 1998).

Risk Factors of Battering in Chinese Societies

The risk factors of battering in Chinese populations are similar to those reported in Western studies. With regard to the abusers' characteristics, Chinese abusive partners tend to be unemployed or of a low socioeconomic status (Leung, Leung, Lam, & Ho, 1999; Parish, Wang, Laumann, Pan, & Luo, 2004; Xu et al., 2005; Yick, 2000); to abuse alcohol and drugs (Liu & Zhang, 2005; Parish et al., 2004; Xu et al., 2005); to have a gambling problem (Liu & Zhang, 2005); to be

young (Tang, 1999a); to have a sense of insecurity, an aggressive personality, poor anger management, and a lack of empathy (Chan, 2004); to have a psychological disorder (Liu & Zhang, 2005); and to suffer from sexual jealousy (Parish et al., 2004).

The Link Between Personality Characteristics and Chinese Culture in Producing Abusive Men

It is noteworthy that among risk factors of battering in Chinese society, all but socioeconomic indicators are personality characteristics. The importance of personality factors for understanding abusive Chinese partners can be explained through a consideration of Chinese culture. Chinese culture emphasizes morality at the individual level and harmony at the relationship level. Perseverance as a conflict resolution strategy and tolerance of pain are highly regarded by Chinese people. This means that showing discontent or anger in public is frowned on because of concern about losing face (Chan, 2006). The suppression of feelings is a common reaction to conflict, but when people are challenged in a private setting, they are more likely to lose their temper. Violence is generally not recognized in Chinese culture except within the family. Violence in the form of corporal punishment is used as a means of inducing feelings of shame and is commonly used in the process of socialization to control children's behavior. Through socialization and control, Chinese people learn to follow social norms and avoid being shamed (Chan, 2001). The expectations placed on sons are especially high. Studies report that males experience more physical punishment in their lifetime, especially in childhood, than do females (Harris, 1996). Physical punishment is common in Chinese culture, which accepts beating as a method of rearing a competent male who is expected to be the inheritor of the family clan and business (Lam, 1992). In Chinese society, an individual male comes to represent both his family and his family of origin. Although he receives power and privilege over other family members, he bears the great burden of having to honor the family and to achieve. Burdened by the heavy demands of the performance need and achievement orientation of masculinity, men seldom express emotions and have difficulty articulating their feelings. This results in poor anger and stress management, leading to an approval of the use of violence as a way of correcting family members' behavior.

The Role of Chinese Culture in Perpetuating the Abuse of Women

According to Chinese tradition, a woman does not occupy a powerful position but has to obey her father, her husband, and her son. As one Chinese saying puts it, "a husband sings, the wife hums along" (Bond, 1991, p. 45). The husband–wife relationship is defined in terms of a hierarchy. The male usually dominates the family and inherits the family property. The masculine stereotype is often associated with a sense of superiority, whereas the female stereotype is associated with a sense of inferiority (Cheung, 1996, pp. 47–53). According to the Confucian teaching, women should subject themselves to three obediences and four virtues. The model of behavior for women in relation to men in traditional Chinese society was prescribed in the four books of Confucius:

A woman yields obedience to the instructions of man, and helps to carry out his principles. . . . When young, she must obey her father and elder brother; when married she must obey her husband; when her husband is dead, she must obey her son. . . . A woman's business is simply the preparation and supplying of drink and food. (Cited in Pearson & Leung, 1995, p. 4)

In Chinese culture, a woman must observe the four virtues: morality, proper speech, modest manners, and diligent work. The social and cultural legitimacy of a woman's subordination is regarded as an important factor that contributes to violence against women (Liu, 1999). In Hong Kong, there is a discrepancy between policy and practice and between cognitive and emotional perspectives. Since the establishment of the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission in 1996, the public has been educated about the concepts of gender equality. At the levels of policy and cognition, people accept that the status of women has changed. However, this is not borne out in daily practice. In situations of battering, couples are likely to hold traditional gender-role expectations. Battered women often accept that a woman's role involves subordination to her husband and being the caretaker who is responsible for the harmony and wholeness of the family. These beliefs seem to keep battered women trapped in an abusive relationship.

About This Study

Culture-specific risk factors of battering in Chinese societies have not been adequately addressed. There

is a tendency to generalize the findings of studies of risk factors to different cultures. An application of Archer's (2006) research in the context of Chinese culture suggests that male violence against women will be a particularly important problem in China. However, studies designed to understand domestic violence in Chinese societies have usually focused on just a few factors such as patriarchal structure, power, and control (Liu, 1999; Tang, 1999b; Xu, 1997). As such, these studies have only identified a small number of risk factors. A more comprehensive study of risk factors in Hong Kong and mainland China will help to provide a better understanding of battering in Chinese communities. This study was conducted in a refuge for battered women in Hong Kong. Any woman from the refuge who reported that she had been abused by her partner met the criteria to participate in the study. Given that this study is based on a clinical sample, as well as the knowledge that most women in such samples are likely to have been battered and the fact that past research suggests that psychological characteristics are important for understanding battering, a number of personality characteristics of Chinese male batterers were examined. It was hypothesized that the presence of negative personality characteristics would be associated with a higher incidence of male battering of Chinese women.

Method

Both residents and ex-residents who met the study criteria during the study period were invited to participate. The inclusion criteria were being a woman aged 18 or older who gave her informed consent. The participants had been living in a refuge for battered women or had left the refuge less than 1 year before the study period. According to the refuge representatives, about half of the ex-residents had returned to their husbands. The other half of the ex-residents were in the process of divorce. All of the participants stayed intact with their partners at the time of the research interviews. Some of the participants were separated or divorced from their partners, and studies have shown that these women may have a greater risk for nonlethal violence (Brownridge, 2006; Brownridge et al., in press).

The participants were interviewed face to face by research assistants who were trained to conduct research interviews with abused women. Each participant was assessed individually in a quiet room, which

was located in a private room of the refuge with a comfortable, well-lit setting containing a table and chairs. A verbal briefing was given to all participants about the format of the assessment. The purpose of the study was explained, and the questionnaires were distributed to the participants. They were asked to recall the conflict with their partners, and demographic information was collected.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. An information sheet was provided, and written consent was required from each participant. They were told that the purpose of the survey interview was primarily to collect statistical information. The data were collected, processed, and analyzed in aggregate, without identification of individual participants. Confidentiality was strictly maintained to protect the privacy of the participants. The research assistant informed the participants that feelings of discomfort may arise in recalling the conflict with their partners. The participants were informed that in the event that they found the interviewing experience stressful, they would be given the opportunity to have a rest before continuing with the interview. If they chose to withdraw from the study, they were able to do so with no questions asked, and there would be no adverse effect on the services they received. The study was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Hong Kong.

Measures

Demographic Questions

The questionnaire began with demographic questions about socioeconomic background, age, education level, occupational status, and current relationship status.

Wife Abuse

The occurrence of wife abuse was measured with the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996), which is widely used to measure the occurrence and severity of tactics for resolving conflicts between intimate partners. The CTS2 is a 39-item self-report scale that contains five scales. Each scale has minor and severe subscales.

The study examined the prevalence and incidence of wife abuse, including physical assault, psychological aggression, injury, and sexual coercion, as measured by

the CTS2. Psychological aggression refers to verbal and nonverbal aggressive behaviors. Items belonging to the minor subscale are insulting or swearing at a partner, shouting or yelling at a partner, stomping out of the room or house or yard during a disagreement, and saying something to spite a partner. The severe subscale includes items such as calling a partner fat or ugly, destroying something belonging to a partner, accusing a partner of being a lousy lover, and threatening to hit or throw something at a partner. These behaviors are most often verbal but also include forms of aggression that are not inflicted directly on a partner. Physical assault refers to the use of physical force against a partner as a means of resolving conflict. Items belonging to the minor violence subscale are throwing something at a partner that could hurt, twisting a partner's arm or hair, pushing or shoving a partner, grabbing a partner, and slapping a partner. Items indicating severe violence are using a knife or gun against a partner, punching or hitting a partner with something that could hurt, choking a partner, slamming a partner against a wall, beating up a partner, burning or scalding a partner on purpose, and kicking a partner. The injury scale measures partner-inflicted physical injury, as indicated by bone or tissue damage, a need for medical attention, or pain continuing for a day or more. Sexual coercion is defined as behavior that is intended to compel the partner to engage in unwanted sexual activity. The sexual coercion scale is intended to cover a range of coercive acts, from verbal insistence to physical force. The internal consistency reliability of the CTS2 scales ranges from .79 to .95. For the purpose of this study, the CTS2 scales were translated into Chinese. In this study, the Chinese version of the CTS2 showed satisfactory reliability (α ranged from .75 to .86).

In this study, the "gold standard" of defining prevalence and incidence proposed by Brownridge & Halli (1999) was adopted. Prevalence is the extent to which violent behavior is distributed in the population, whereas incidence is conceived of as the amount of violent behavior that occurs among those in the population who experience violence. Using the CTS2 scales, the prevalence of violence in the preceding year is the percentage of the sample who reported one or more instances of the acts in each scale during the preceding year. The lifetime prevalence shows that one or more of the acts occurred either in the preceding year or in previous years. To measure the incidence of wife abuse in the preceding year, the responses to the CTS2 were scored as

Table 1. Items Measuring Personality Characteristics of the Male Batterers

Characteristics	Items Constructed
Poor anger management	He lost his temper
Violence approval	He believed that using violence to dissolve our conflict is acceptable
Alcohol abuse	He is always drunk
Apathy	He was apathetic to me
Jealousy	He was jealous and suspicious
Control	He controlled my social life with my family/peers
Dominance	He believed that I ought to be obedient
Sense of helplessness	He disclosed that nobody could understand him; he was helpless
Feeling of isolation	He was socially isolated

follows: 0 = never, 1 = once, 2 = twice, 4 = 3 to 5 times, 8 = 6 to 10 times, 15 = 11 to 20 times, and 25 = more than 20 times (Straus et al., 1996). Thus, the minimum score and the maximum score of each item were 1 and 25, respectively. The incidence of a scale was calculated by summing the incidents of all the acts for a given scale and presented as a mean frequency.

The Characteristics of Male Batterers

A list of the personality characteristics of the male batterers was self-constructed. The purpose of drawing up this checklist was to provide a preliminary list with which to explore the characteristics of the male batterers in this study. As Hong Kong was at an early stage in working with male batterers, it was difficult to obtain a sample size of male batterers that was large enough for use in this study. As a result, the characteristics of the male batterers were obtained indirectly through interviewing the victims rather than from the batterers themselves. A similar reporting approach has been used in previous studies such as Statistics Canada's General Social Survey (Brownridge, 2006; Brownridge et al., in press). The characteristics included poor anger management, violence approval, alcohol abuse, apathy, jealousy, control, dominance, sense of helplessness, and feeling of isolation. Table 1 shows the nine constructed items. The participants were asked to report *yes* or *no* on the occurrence of each item on the checklist. In this study, the nine items showed satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = .67$).

Child Abuse

One item was constructed for the participants to report on their partner's use of violence against their children: *Did your partner use physical violence, psychological abuse, or sexual violence against your child(ren)?* The participants were asked to report *yes* or *no* on the occurrence of their partner's child-abuse acts.

Data Analysis

A descriptive analysis of the demographic profile of the participants and the prevalence and incidence of battering was conducted. To examine the differences in the incidence of battering in the preceding year based on the characteristics of male batterers, *t* tests were conducted. To adjust the α levels for multiple comparisons to avoid Type I error, Holm's procedure for an overall significance of 5% was applied (Holm, 1979). Simple logistic regression was performed with the personality characteristics on the prevalence of battering in the past year. Logistic regression is an appropriate technique for predicting a dichotomous dependent variable from a set of independent variables. An odds ratio greater than 1 indicates that the independent variable is associated with an increase in the odds of the dependent variable. An odds ratio less than 1 indicates that the independent variable is associated with a decrease in the odds of the dependent variable.

Results

Participants

The participants of this study were 210 women who were living in a refuge for battered women or who had left the refuge less than 1 year before. The demographic information both of the participants and of their husbands is presented in Table 2. The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 61 years, with a median age of 36 years ($M = 37.35$, $SD = 6.99$). Among them, 38.1% were educated to primary-school level or less, 30% to junior high school level, 28.1% to senior high school level, and 3.8% to university level or above. The majority of the participants were housewives (61.9%), and most had children (85.2%). A total of 28.5% of the participants had immigrated to Hong Kong less than 3 years before, and 58.1% of the participants were separated or divorced from their husbands.

Table 2. Demographic Information of Female Participants and Their Husbands ($N = 210$)

Characteristics	Female Participants ($N = 210$)	Participants' Husbands ($N = 210$)
Age in years		
Median	36.0	43.5
Range	20–61	24–83
Education (%)		
None	3.8	5.3
Primary	34.3	46.0
Junior high school	30.0	25.4
Senior high school	28.1	19.0
University or above	3.8	4.3
Marital status (%)		
Married	38.1	
Cohabiting	3.8	
Divorced	13.8	
Separated	44.3	
Working status (%)		
Full-time	11.9	48.6
Housework	61.9	0
Part-time	11.0	16.6
Unemployed	15.2	34.8
Years of residence in Hong Kong (%)		
1–3	28.5	
4–6	12.1	
7–9	12.6	
10 years or more	46.9	
Number of children (%)		
0	4.8	
1–2	70.9	
3–5	14.3	

The age of the participants' husbands ranged from 24 to 83 years, with a median age of 43.5 years ($M = 44.58$, $SD = 9.48$). Among them, 51.3% were educated to primary-school level or less, 25.4% to junior high school level, 19% to senior high school level, and 4.3% to university level or above. A total of 34.8% of the husbands were unemployed, and 16.6% were working part-time.

Prevalence and Incidence of Battering

The results in Table 3 display a very high prevalence of battering against women in their lifetime and during the year preceding the report of abuse. This is particularly the case for physical assault and psychological aggression, which cause a relatively high rate of physical and psychological injury. In terms of the incidence of violence that occurred in the preceding year,

Table 3. The Prevalence and Incidence of Battering ($N = 210$)

	Incidence		Prevalence	
	Mean	SD	Preceding Year (%)	Lifetime (%)
Physical assault	32.2	48.7	91.4	96.7
Minor	18.1	26.0		
Severe	14.1	25.5		
Injury	14.0	20.0	80.5	88.1
Minor	10.0	14.3		
Severe	4.0	7.8		
Psychological aggression	73.5	53.5	95.2	97.6
Minor	46.5	32.5		
Severe	27.0	25.5		
Sexual coercion	8.8	13.0	56.7	62.9
Minor	5.5	8.5		
Severe	3.3	7.3		

Note: Weighted incidence: 0 = never; 1 = once; 2 = twice; 4 = 3 to 5 times; 8 = 6 to 10 times; 15 = 11 to 20 times; and 25 = more than 20 times.

psychological aggression was more frequent than physical assault. Sexual coercion was less frequent.

t tests

The results in Tables 4 to 7 display the means, standard deviations, and test statistics for the incidence of physical assault, injury, psychological aggression, and sexual coercion in the preceding year, arranged in terms of the personality characteristics of and child abuse by the male batterers. The preliminary analysis showed that as reported by the female participants, those partners who managed their anger poorly and approved of the use of violence used more physical assault and caused more injury to their female partners. Those who abused alcohol used significantly more physical assault but did not cause significantly more injuries. The results also suggest that male partners with all of the measured characteristics except sense of helplessness and feeling of isolation were using more psychological aggression against their female partners. That is, males characterized by poor anger management, violence approval, alcohol abuse, apathy, jealousy, control, and domination more frequently used psychological aggression. Male partners who possess the characteristics of poor anger management, alcohol abuse, jealousy, and dominance would report using more sexual coercion.

Table 4. The Characteristics of Male Batterers With the Incidence of Physical Assault in the Preceding Year

		Incidence			<i>t</i> test	<i>p</i>	<i>DF</i>
		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Personality characteristics							
Poor anger management	No	25	11.48	11.08	-5.22	.000*** ^a	169
	Yes	182	33.96	49.77			
Violence approval	No	78	21.88	33.57	-2.76	.006*** ^a	193
	Yes	119	39.58	56.47			
Alcohol abuse	No	111	24.04	37.62	-2.68	.008**	134
	Yes	84	43.60	58.22			
Apathy	No	80	31.10	54.43	-0.25	.805	200
	Yes	122	32.80	43.20			
Jealousy	No	77	33.19	57.70	-0.01	.993	199
	Yes	124	33.26	43.82			
Control	No	104	28.95	48.27	-1.13	.258	202
	Yes	100	36.76	50.13			
Dominance	No	37	33.35	60.71	0.09	.926	202
	Yes	167	32.51	46.45			
Sense of helplessness	No	122	34.53	53.60	0.41	.684	193
	Yes	73	31.52	43.11			
Feeling of isolation	No	79	35.61	56.85	0.79	.431	176
	Yes	99	29.73	42.52			
Child abuse							
	No	87	23.48	34.43	-2.28	.024*	202
	Yes	121	37.72	55.52			

a. Statistically significant by Holm's procedure for an overall significance of 5%.

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001.

Table 5. The Characteristics of Male Batterers With the Incidence of Injury in the Preceding Year

		Incidence			<i>t</i> test	<i>p</i>	<i>DF</i>
		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Personality characteristics							
Poor anger management	No	25	4.60	5.59	-5.54	.000*** ^a	138
	Yes	182	15.21	20.95			
Violence approval	No	78	9.81	14.00	-2.74	.007**	194
	Yes	119	16.98	22.80			
Alcohol abuse	No	111	12.07	17.19	-1.61	.110	146
	Yes	84	16.94	23.41			
Apathy	No	80	13.20	20.31	-0.62	.535	200
	Yes	122	15.01	20.15			
Jealousy	No	77	14.42	22.14	0.07	.942	199
	Yes	124	14.20	19.07			
Control	No	104	11.89	17.18	-1.62	.107	202
	Yes	100	16.44	22.68			
Dominance	No	37	14.54	19.07	0.07	.941	202
	Yes	167	14.27	20.48			
Sense of helplessness	No	122	15.10	21.95	0.67	.509	193
	Yes	73	13.14	16.36			
Feeling of isolation	No	79	16.23	21.86	1.46	.147	148
	Yes	99	11.82	17.56			
Child abuse							
	No	87	11.87	18.59	-1.20	.233	206
	Yes	121	15.22	20.79			

a. Statistically significant by Holm's procedure for an overall significance of 5%.

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001.

Table 6. The Characteristics of Male Batterers With the Incidence of Psychological Aggression in the Preceding Year

		N	Incidence		t test	p	DF
			M	SD			
Personality characteristics							
Poor anger management	No	25	38.08	40.30	-4.47	.000*** ^a	37
	Yes	182	78.22	53.42			
Violence approval	No	78	64.05	53.19	-2.31	.022*	195
	Yes	119	81.84	52.59			
Alcohol abuse	No	111	67.14	50.86	-2.59	.010**	193
	Yes	84	86.88	54.93			
Apathy	No	80	63.81	53.53	-2.45	.015*	200
	Yes	122	82.35	51.88			
Jealousy	No	77	64.26	53.02	-2.27	.024*	199
	Yes	124	81.52	52.10			
Control	No	104	65.45	52.15	-2.58	.011*	202
	Yes	100	84.56	53.65			
Dominance	No	37	56.46	50.69	-2.37	.019*	202
	Yes	167	79.16	53.13			
Sense of helplessness	No	122	78.75	57.48	0.80	.426	175
	Yes	73	72.71	47.08			
Feeling of isolation	No	79	75.23	53.93	0.17	.864	176
	Yes	99	73.88	50.62			
Child abuse	No	87	63.45	50.58	-2.27	.024 ^a	206
	Yes	121	80.39	54.65			

a. Statistically significant by Holm's procedure for an overall significance of 5%.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 7. The Characteristics of Male Batterers With the Incidence of Sexual Coercion in the Preceding Year

		N	Incidence		t test	p	DF
			M	SD			
Personality characteristics							
Poor anger management	No	25	2.84	4.28	-5.20	.000*** ^a	110
	Yes	181	9.75	13.69			
Violence approval	No	78	7.46	11.00	-0.97	.334	195
	Yes	119	9.27	13.87			
Alcohol abuse	No	111	7.15	12.21	-2.25	.026*	162
	Yes	84	11.52	14.32			
Apathy	No	80	7.73	11.47	-1.03	.305	200
	Yes	122	9.67	14.16			
Jealousy	No	77	6.71	10.53	-2.13	.034*	194
	Yes	124	10.49	14.51			
Control	No	104	7.38	11.78	-1.66	.100	202
	Yes	100	10.41	14.26			
Dominance	No	37	5.05	9.36	-2.46	.016*	75
	Yes	167	9.65	13.71			
Sense of helplessness	No	122	10.05	14.19	1.22	.224	175
	Yes	73	7.77	11.62			
Feeling of isolation	No	79	8.27	11.29	-0.79	.433	176
	Yes	99	9.82	14.35			
Child abuse	No	87	6.59	11.05	-2.22	.028*	204
	Yes	120	10.48	14.21			

a. Statistically significant by Holm's procedure for an overall significance of 5%.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 8. The Characteristics of Male Batterers and Their Association With the Prevalence of Preceding-year Battering as Reported With Univariate Regression Analyses

Characteristic	Crude OR (95% CI)	Crude OR (95% CI)	Crude OR (95% CI)	Crude OR (95% CI)
	Physical Assault	Physical Injury	Psychological Aggression	Sexual Coercion
Personality characteristics	1.382* (1.054, 1.814)	1.167 (.978, 1.393)	1.475* (1.018, 2.137)	1.163* (1.005, 1.346)
Constant	2.580	1.841	4.020	.631

Note: OR = odds ratio; CI = confidence interval.

* $p < .05$; statistically significant ORs.

The α levels of the t tests were adjusted for multiple comparisons using Holm's (1979) procedure to avoid Type I error. When this was done, only poor anger management for all types of violence and violence approval for physical assault remained statistically significant.

The findings also revealed that those men who abused their children were more frequently aggressive toward their wives than those who did not. The participants reported that these men committed more physically, psychologically, and sexually abusive acts.

Logistic Regression

Results from simple logistic regression showed that personality characteristics were significantly associated with the odds of physically, psychologically, and sexually abusive acts during the previous year (see Table 8).

Discussion

The present analysis suggested that a number of personality characteristics (such as poor anger management and approval of the use of violence) are associated with a higher incidence of physical assault. These findings are consistent with previous studies that found that Chinese abusive partners were more likely to have poor anger management (Chan, 2004) and approval of using violence against women (Liu, 1999).

The findings of this study indicated an association between child abuse and the frequency of battering. Such an association has been identified in studies conducted in Western societies (Hartley,

2002; Margolin, Gordis, Medina & Oliver, 2003), but the current study is the first to suggest such an association in Chinese populations. This exploratory study demonstrated that the men who perpetrated child abuse used more physical, psychological, and sexual violence against their partner.

The results of this study suggested that male batterers with personality risk factors—in particular, poor anger management—engage in more battering. This finding suggests that mental health professionals need to become more active in the assessment and treatment of batterers. Current treatment programs for domestic violence (Home Office, 2003) are mostly aimed at educating batterers and treating them for violence-inducing habits such as substance misuse. Programs that focus on behavioral outcomes have been criticized, and evaluations of these programs have shown that there is a demand for a holistic approach to address the psychological characteristics and individual differences of batterers (Bowen & Gilchrist, 2004; Rees & Rivett, 2005)—in particular, personality problems. Practitioners should make an appropriate clinical assessment of the personality characteristics of the batterer, and if necessary, make an appropriate referral to services for clients who are suspected of alcohol abuse. Interventions for male batterers in Hong Kong should include the treatment of personality problems.

This study improves our understanding of the characteristics of Chinese male batterers. However, it has three major limitations. First, the perspective of the male batterers was not taken into account. The victims' subjective feelings and views on the dynamics of partner abuse may have affected their reports of their husband's characteristics. For example, the items involving sense of helplessness and feeling of isolation were not significantly associated with abusive acts. This may be because it was difficult for the female participants to report on the psychological state of their male partners, especially because a majority of them had experienced spousal conflict and violence, which may have made communication between them and their spouse appreciably difficult. Although it would be challenging to obtain a sample of male batterers as large as that used in this study, future research should, assuming such a recruitment is feasible, interview male batterers. Second, the checklist used was self-constructed for the purposes of this study. Thus, the study was exploratory in nature. Future research should develop a scale or checklist for other local studies with good psychometric properties. The third limitation of the study was that the data relied solely on women's self-reports.

Women's use of aggression was not measured in this study. Archer (2000, 2006) has argued that different methods of measurement, samples, self- and partner reports, as well as cultural differences are a source of bias associated with disparate findings across studies. In this study, the use of an act-based measure (CTS2), a Chinese sample from a refuge, and self-reporting inevitably caused bias in the reported rates of men's use of aggression. The resulting rates, given such potential biases, did not inform us why some men and not others are aggressive toward their wives (Dutton, 1994). However, as recognized by Archer (2000), this kind of study provides an important first step for understanding patterns of physical aggression among men.

Although there are limitations in the current study, it was nonetheless a preliminary attempt to identify a checklist of factors that can depict the characteristics of male batterers in Chinese society. As well, the current study provided a preliminary indication of the personality characteristics of male batterers in a sample of Chinese battered women in Hong Kong. The risk factors of Chinese men's use of violence against their female partners could be psychological (such as poor anger management) as well as cultural (approval of using violence). Anger-management training and treating men with aggressive personalities will be helpful for preventing battering in Hong Kong. However, it must be cautioned that an emphasis on anger management as a skill may be misinterpreted as implying that the victim provoked the anger. Indeed, it has been argued that the "male deficit" approach provides an incomplete explanation of men's abuse of female partners unless it is accompanied by a "belief systems model" to confront abusive beliefs (Russell & Frohberg, 1995). With respect to Chinese culture, it has been suggested that Chinese male batterers justify their violence using cultural values that approve of violence and blame their partners for not being virtuous (Chan, 2007). The results of the current study, which showed that violence approval was significantly associated with the incidence of physical assault in particular, were also consistent with the view that the batterer's attitude toward the use of violence should be challenged. In short, the results of the current study provide preliminary evidence that suggests that the treatment and prevention of Chinese men's use of violence against their partners should include both anger skill management as well as efforts to change beliefs and attitudes that justify their use of violence.

References

- Ammerman, R. T., & Hersen, M. (Eds.). (1990). *Treatment of family violence: A sourcebook*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Archer, J. (2000). Sex differences in aggression between heterosexual partners: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(5), 651-680.
- Archer, J. (2006). Cross-cultural differences in physical aggression between partners: A social-role analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10(2), 133-153.
- Beasley, R., & Stoltenberg, C. D. (1992). Personality characteristics of male spouse abusers. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 23(4), 310-317.
- Bond, M. H. (1991). *Beyond the Chinese face: Insights from psychology* (1st ed.). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press (China).
- Bowen, E., & Gilchrist, E. (2004). Comprehensive evaluation: A holistic approach to evaluating domestic violence offender programmes. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 48(2), 215-234.
- Brownridge, D. A. (2006). Violence against women post-separation. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 11(5), 514-530.
- Brownridge, D. A., Chan, K. L., Hiebert-Murphy, D., Ristock, J., Tiwari, A., Leung, W. C., et al. (in press). The elevated risk for non-lethal post-separation violence in Canada: A comparison of separated, divorced, and married women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 23(4).
- Brownridge, D. A., & Halli, S. S. (1999). Measuring family violence: The conceptualization and utilization of prevalence and incidence rates. *Journal of Family Violence*, 14(4), 333-350.
- Chan, K. L. (2001). Understanding of family violence through the Chinese concepts of face and Yi. *Indigenous Psychological Research in Chinese Societies*, 15, 63-111. Taiwan: Taiwan National University.
- Chan, K. L. (2004). Correlates of wife assault in Hong Kong Chinese families. *Violence and Victims*, 19(2), 189-201.
- Chan, K. L. (2006). The Chinese concept of face and violence against women. *International Social Work*, 49(1), 65-73.
- Chan, K. L. (2007). Intimate partner violence in Chinese society. In K. A. Kendall-Tackett & S. M. Giacomoni (Eds.), *Intimate partner violence* (pp. 1-19). Kingston, NJ: Civic Research Institute.
- Cheung, F. M. (1996). Gender role development. In S. Lau (Ed.), *Growing up the Chinese way: Chinese child and adolescent development* (pp. 45-68). Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.
- Dutton, D. G. (1994). Patriarchy and wife assault: The ecological fallacy. *Violence and Victims*, 9, 167-182.
- Dutton, D. G. (1998). *The abusive personality: Violence and control in intimate relationships*. New York, London: Guilford.

- Harris, M. B. (1996). Aggressive experiences and aggressiveness: Relationship to ethnicity, gender, and age. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 26*(10), 843-870.
- Hartley, C. C. (2002). The co-occurrence of child maltreatment and domestic violence: Examining both neglect and child physical abuse. *Child Maltreatment, 7*(4), 349-358.
- Holm, S. (1979). A simple sequentially rejective multiple test procedure. *Scandinavian Journal of Statistics, 6*, 65-70.
- Home Office. (2003). *Safety and justice: The government's proposals on domestic violence*. London: Author.
- Johnson, M. P. (1995). Patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence: Two forms of violence against women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 57*, 283-294.
- Lam, M. Y. (1992). The phenomenon and meaning of corporal punishment in Chinese society. In K. S. Yang & A. B. Yu (Eds.), *The psychology and behaviors of the Chinese* (pp. 271-319). Taipei: Guaiquan.
- Leung, W. C., Leung, T. W., Lam, Y. Y., & Ho, P. C. (1999). The prevalence of domestic violence against pregnant women in a Chinese community. *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics, 66*, 23-30.
- Liu, M. (1999). Enduring violence and staying in marriage: Stories of battered women in rural China. *Violence Against Women, 5*(12), 1469-1492.
- Liu, M., & Zhang, L. (2005). Personal experiences and public attitudes: Findings from the national survey. In L. Huang & W. Rong (Eds.), *Combating domestic violence against women: China in action* (pp. 125-142). Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.
- Margolin, G., Gordis, E. B., Medina, A. M., & Oliver, P. H. (2003). *The co-occurrence of husband-to-wife aggression, family-of-origin aggression, and child abuse potential in a community sample: Implications for parenting*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 18*(4), 413-440.
- Miller, S. L., & Wellford, C. F. (1997). Patterns and correlates of interpersonal violence. In A. P. Cardarelli (Ed.), *Violence between intimate partners: Patterns, causes, and effects*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Parish, W. L., Wang, T., Laumann, E. O., Pan, S., & Luo, Y. (2004). Intimate partner violence in China: National prevalence, risk factors and associated health problems. *International Family Planning Perspectives, 30*(4), 174-181.
- Pearson, V., & Leung, B. K. P. (Eds.). (1995). *Women in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Rees, A., & Rivett, M. (2005). Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend: Towards a variety in programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence. *The Journal of Community and Criminal Justice, 52*(3), 277-288.
- Roberts, A. R. (1987). Psychosocial characteristics of batterers: A study of 234 men charged with domestic violence offenses. *Journal of Family Violence, 2*(1), 81-93.
- Russell, M. N., & Frohberg, J. (1995). *Confronting abusive beliefs: Group treatment for abusive men*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saunders, D. G. (1992). A typology of men who batter: Three types derived from cluster analysis. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 62*(2), 264-275.
- Stith, S. M., & Straus, M. A. (Eds.). (1995). *Understanding partner violence: Prevalence, causes, consequence and solutions*. Minneapolis, MN: National Council on Family Relations.
- Straus, M. A., Hamby, S. L., Boney-McCoy, S., & Sugarman, D. B. (1996). The Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2): Development and preliminary psychometric data. *Journal of Family Issues, 17*(3), 283-316.
- Stuart, G. L., & Munroe, A. H. (1995). Identifying subtypes of maritally violent men: Descriptive dimensions, correlates and causes of violence, and treatment implications. In S. M. Stith & M. A. Straus (Eds.), *Understanding partner violence: Prevalence, causes, consequence and solutions* (pp. 162-172). Minneapolis, MN: National Council on Family Relations.
- Tang, C. S. K. (1999a). Wife abuse in Hong Kong Chinese families: A community survey. *Journal of Family Violence, 14*(2), 173-191.
- Tang, C. S. K. (1999b). Marital power and aggression in a community sample of Hong Kong Chinese families. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 14*(6), 586-602.
- Tolman, R. M., & Bennett, L. W. (1990). A review of quantitative research on men who batter. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 5*(1), 87-118.
- Xu, X. (1997). The prevalence and determination of wife abuse in urban China. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 28*, 280-303.
- Xu, X., Zhu, F., O'Campo, P., Koenig, M. A., Mock, V., & Campbell, J. (2005). Prevalence of and risk factors for intimate partner violence in China. *American Journal of Public Health, 95*(1), 78-85.
- Yick, A. G. (2000). Predictors of physical spousal/intimate violence in Chinese American families. *Journal of Family Violence, 15*(3), 249-267.