WHEN WIFE-BEATING IS NOT NECESSARILY ABUSE: A FEMINIST AND CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF ABUSE AS EXPRESSED BY TIBETAN SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the views of Tibetan women who have experienced physical violence from male intimate partners. Their views on acceptable versus unacceptable hitting, and the acts besides hitting which they felt to be unacceptable or abusive, are explored. Views of survivors' relatives/friends and men who have hit their wives are also included. Western-based domestic violence theory is shown to be incommensurate with abuse in particular socio-cultural settings. As feminist scholars emphasise listening deeply to voices of women in the global South, this article demonstrates how such listening might be undertaken when the views expressed by women diverge from feminism.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers of domestic violence generally consider hitting or beating between intimate partners to be part and parcel of abusive relationships.[1] In fact, theorists have felt the need to argue that abuse involves much more than physical violence alone (Johnson, 1995; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Stark, 2007). This is itself an indication of the fact that slaps, punches, kicks, and other acts of violence are fundamental to the most common and prevalent conceptualisations of domestic abuse.

Within the English-language literature, data and theory on intimate partner violence have largely emerged from research conducted in the United States or conducted by scholars based in Western countries.[2] However, outside of the scholarly realm, there are those who do not believe hitting one's wife is always an abusive or unacceptable activity. Prevalent social norms in many parts of the world promote the notion that wife-beating can be acceptable. This paper investigates the rationale behind such norms, and in particular seeks to understand under which types of circumstances women who were themselves hit or beaten felt they had been abused. Utilising interviews with women and men residing on the northeastern edge of the Tibetan plateau, this paper looks into the accounts of Tibetan women who have themselves been hit by their husbands, the accounts of Tibetan men who have hit their wives, and the views of relatives and friends of victims. The paper deciphers when and why participants conceived of wife-beating as acceptable or unacceptable, as well as which non-violent actions were considered unacceptable or abusive. The aim of the paper, therefore, is to delve into the question of where and how the line between the acceptable and unacceptable is drawn within local conceptions.

Lai Ching Leung describes two main perspectives by which domestic violence has been viewed in Hong Kong – the family perspective and the feminist perspective. As Leung states:

> According to the family perspective, domestic violence has no single cause but rather results from the psychological problems of an individual, situational factors, poor anger management skills, or frustration with the responses and feedback of other family

> members. Individual problems are seen as a manifestation of a dysfunctional family unit, and each family member has a part to play in creating conflict and violence. Applying the family perspective to domestic violence is likely to result in the problem being understood as gender symmetrical, with men and women seen as equally likely to be the perpetrators and victims of violence. (Leung, 2011, pp. 292–293)

The feminist perspective, on the other hand, focuses on power imbalances between men and women, both in society and within the family, and tends to view intimate partner violence as a process by which "men use violence as a means to maintain their authority and control within the family and to keep women in a subordinate position" (Leung, 2011, p. 293). In the study setting, as we shall see, interviewees' views fell largely in line with the above-mentioned family perspective, regardless of whether the interviewees in question were victims, perpetrators, or onlookers.

Analysts working in a wide variety of settings, such as South Africa, Asia, and the United States, have found that norms promoting men's dominance and women's subordination underpin occurrence of domestic violence (Choi & Ting, 2008; Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2014; Kim & Motsei, 2002; Logan & Raphael, 2007; Stark, 2007). Conceptions by which men are deemed to have the right to hit their wives for transgressions such as infidelity or neglecting household responsibilities have also been found in a wide variety of settings, such as South Africa, Egypt, Kuwait, and African immigrant communities in Australia (Fisher, 2013; Kim & Motsei, 2002; Nayak, Byrne, Martin, & Abraham, 2003; Yount & Li, 2009). Such norms are, moreover, by no means confined to non-Western settings alone, as legal codes and societal norms in Western countries have historically enshrined such views (Flood & Pease, 2009).

Similarly, in the study setting, participant observation as well as interviews with family members and friends of victims revealed that hitting one's female partner was generally considered acceptable if the hitting was seen to be aimed at disciplining a wife or punishing her for a transgression. The transgressions in question were often understood as cases of women

stepping out of the bounds of their normative role within the household. The husband, often seen as the disciplinarian and head of household, was viewed as having the right to punish and silence his wife when 'necessary.' As a result, hitting was often considered not particularly heinous, but rather relatively mundane and normal. Usually, such opinions were expressed by both genders, as well as by those falling across a spectrum of education and age levels. In many cases, moreover, women who have themselves been hit agreed with these views.

In some ways, therefore, the current study is but a repetition and confirmation of norms and practices found in many settings worldwide. The current study develops these findings further, however, by undertaking a detailed exploration of why certain instances of hitting were considered acceptable, even by the women who themselves were beaten, and why other instances were considered abusive or unacceptable.

Many feminist scholars have insisted on the importance of listening to women from the global South, accepting their priorities, and supporting Southern women in their own struggles rather than imposing external norms (Abu-Lhugod, 2013; Smith, 2011; Stone-Mediatore, 2009). These are valuable approaches, as they help to counteract insensitivity to cultural difference and neo-colonial paternalism towards communities of the global South, problems which are frequently encountered within popular opinion as well as among researchers and activists in the global North (Abu-Lhugod, 2013; Cornwall, 2012; Gangoli, 2014; Smith, 2011; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Stone-Mediatore, 2009; Ticktin, 2011). In order to guard against treating Tibetan women and Tibetan society with a condescending and ethnocentric paternalism, therefore, it is necessary to comprehend the nuances of Tibetan women's views. This involves comprehending the reasons why various acts are considered either acceptable or unacceptable, and the points at which lines of acceptability are crossed. Without this level of care and attention paid to women's voices, we face the danger of imposing blanket characterisations by which Southern women are unduly pigeonholed, viewed as justifying wife-beating for 'no good reason' or 'just because of

their culture.' Such characterisations are insensitive to the concerns and constraints faced by Southern women.

In her concept of 'cultural translation', Judith Butler argues for cross-cultural listening and dialogue aimed not at imposing norms but at cross-cultural understanding. However, according to Butler, we cannot assume concepts and paradigms will always translate directly across cultures, and therefore some element of mutual *un*intelligibility is likely when engaging in transnational dialogues about ethics. Young similarly contends it is important to refrain from seeking to fit another's views into one's own paradigms, and calls instead for "suspend[ing one's] assumptions in order to [truly] listen." Butler additionally emphasises that we must allow for the possibility that our own ideas become transformed as the values of another culture become intelligible to us (Hutchings, 2013, pp. 93–94). In this paper, I attempt to listen while suspending assumptions and questioning my own paradigms, as Young and Butler call for, and I demonstrate how my ideas have been transformed in the process of this listening. Such an approach may be necessary in other settings of the world as well, where fundamental differences of opinion regarding the acceptability of violence and abuse arise between researchers and interviewees, between health practitioners and patients, or between those who draft governmental policies and communities subject to those policies. At the same time, however, I attempt to refrain from abandoning a feminist ethic.

As we shall see, even after undergoing a process of suspending assumptions and listening deeply to the voices of Tibetan women, a full and complete reconciliation of my own perspective, as an American feminist, and the perspectives of the women I have interviewed has not occurred. This paper concludes, therefore, by addressing questions of how to ethically intervene or engage in activism in a setting such as the Tibetan one, or whether to do so at all. Drawing on the work of policy analysts, I propose an ethical and respectful way forward despite this lack of full agreement between myself and the people I interviewed.

METHODS

This paper is based on fifteen months of fieldwork conducted between May of 2012 and August of 2013 in a number of villages, towns, county seats, and township seats on the northeastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau in Qinghai province of the People's Republic of China.

Fieldwork was aimed at understanding domestic violence dynamics within Tibetan households, and involved in-depth, unstructured interviews with seventy-six women and twenty-four men. As targeted services for domestic violence survivors in the study region do not always have a wide reach and are very rarely utilised by Tibetans, this study could not identify individuals as survivors or perpetrators prior to interview. Interviews were therefore conducted in the general population, primarily with married adult men and women. Sampling was purposive. I interviewed friends of friends and relatives of friends of friends, seeking to obtain a range of age, education, and residence criteria. Thus, farmers and nomads resident in rural villages and nomadic settlements; residents of cities and towns; young, middle-aged, and older individuals; and those with no schooling, a little schooling, and a high level of education were all interviewed.

Since interviewees were sampled from the general population, not all interviewees were victims or perpetrators of domestic violence. A significant minority of interviewees, however, have experienced family violence or abuse. A large number of interviewees additionally told stories of close friends or family who have experienced abuse. Out of a total of 100 individuals interviewed, 21 transcripts were analysed in depth for the current paper. The 21 transcripts were chosen for their usefulness in exploring which actions are understood as constituting unacceptable or abusive behaviour within the study setting. Cases displaying a range of severity were analysed, allowing for an exploration of when and how individual cases were differentiated by study participants as either abusive or non-abusive. Cases therefore range from extremely rare instances of hitting and mutual hitting to circumstances involving frequent and severe beating, verbal abuse, and restrictions of basic individual freedoms. In some cases, no hitting occurred at all, but other dynamics existed that could potentially identify the household dynamic as abusive.

For example, in one case, a woman interviewee was threatened with hitting by her husband but such hitting was not carried out, while in another case hitting did not occur but the husband appeared to ensure his wife was aware she did not have the right to speak or voice her opinions. Additionally, some interviewees were never beaten but were abandoned for an extended period of time by their husbands. This involved husbands simply ignoring wives and losing interest in the marriage altogether, for a period of several months or several years. These cases were described as instances in which husbands started extramarital relationships, lost interest in their marriages, then left home altogether or stopped talking to their wives and ignored them. Such situations were considered worse than beating by some of the women with personal experience of this type of abandonment, as well as by family members of women with such experiences. As a result, these cases were also included in the sample to further understand local conceptions of abuse.

The 21 Tibetan interviewees described in this paper are composed of 17 women and 4 men. 9 interviewees were women who experienced anything between some or very rare instances of hitting to severe and prolonged abuse. 8 women described situations of close relatives entailing a range of severity from any hitting up to severe abuse, and 2 women described such situations occurring to a friend. 3 interviewees were men who have hit their female partners at least once. 1 of these 3 men also described a situation of beating occurring to a close relative. Finally 9 interviewees were women or men who have experienced or enacted no hitting but have been involved in other behaviours besides hitting that may possibly be conceptualised as abusive. 1 of these 9 interviewees is a man. 12 interviewees have experienced or perpetrated at least one instance of hitting.

In addition to the above 21 interviews, remaining interview transcripts were drawn upon for supplementary information on the views of non-victim community members. The current research project did not encounter any men victims of hitting or abuse, nor did I encounter any female perpetrators of hitting, save one case in which mutual hitting between a husband and wife has occurred. Cases in which women threatened to hit another woman within their household or

engaged in verbal abuse, however, are included within the data covered in this paper. These female perpetrators were the mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law of the women victims.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WITHIN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACADEMIC LITERATURE

The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale, or CTS2, is a widely used rubric of questions in quantitative studies of domestic violence. Within this measure, 'physical assault' includes actions such as "threw something at my partner that could hurt," "pushed or shoved my partner," "slapped my partner," "choked my partner," "beat up my partner," "kicked my partner," and "used a knife or gun on my partner." The CTS2's scale for 'psychological aggression' includes items such as "threatened to hit or throw something at my partner," "destroyed something belonging to my partner," "called my partner fat or ugly," "said something to spite my partner," and "insulted or swore at my partner." Finally, the CTS2 includes a sexual coercion scale, involving actions such as threatening, insisting, or using force to make one's partner engage in sexual intercourse, and an injury scale with items that differentiate between minor and severe physical injuries (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996, pp. 308–309).

Similarly, several theorists and commentators describe domestic violence as a process by which a man uses physical violence as well as psychological, emotional, and financial abuse, all in a malicious attempt to assert power and control over his female partner (Gilchrist & Kebbell, 2004; Kilpatrick, 2004; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Stark, 2007). Evan Stark, for example, argues 'domestic violence' is more accurately termed 'coercive control,' and draws parallels between tactics used by abusive men to control heterosexual partners and capture crimes such as kidnapping, the taking of hostages, or the internment of prisoners of war (2007). This bears similarities to the argument of Sloan-Lynch, who asserts that domestic abuse is not a series of "isolated acts of violence" but is instead "a source of brutal oppression" and characterised by "a miasma of fear" (2012, p. 787). As Stark explains, victims often have a sense that perpetrators' excessive anger and violence is possible at

any moment and unpredictable, regardless of what the victim says or does. Abusers regulate and restrict victims' daily activities; often engage in stalking and surveillance of their partners' belongings, phone calls, and activities; work to deprive victims of "money, food, access to communication or transportation," and work to cut victims off from social support such as family and friends (Stark, 2007, p. 5). The U.S. National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey likewise includes sexual violence and coercion, stalking, and physical violence within its conceptualisation. This survey additionally includes an item assessing control of reproductive or sexual health by an intimate partner, and understands psychological aggression to involve the aforementioned 'coercive control,' as well as "name calling, insulting, or humiliating an intimate partner" (Walters, Chen, & Brieding, 2013, p. 17).

3 women among the interviewees analysed in depth for this paper have experienced severe abuse displaying patterns of 'coercive control.' Additionally, 5 women and 2 close relatives of interviewees experienced some but not all of the aspects of abuse conceptualised as 'coercive control.'

LISTENING WHILE SUSPENDING ASSUMPTIONS

Within a context of cross-cultural dialogue, Young warns the Northern analyst not to look for how another's views fit with one's own paradigms, and instead emphasises the importance of "suspend[ing one's] assumptions in order to [truly] listen" (Hutchings, 2013, pp. 93–94). In my case, I was only able to do this after undergoing a process of discovering which paradigms of mine represented foreign concepts to the people I was interviewing. I began fieldwork with a clear idea of what I believed the definition of domestic violence to be, built upon my cultural background and the English-language academic literature on the subject. However, I was repeatedly confronted with a conceptualisation of abuse among interviewees that was significantly different from my own. Moreover, although I had spent many years living in the region prior to beginning my research, and though I spoke the local languages fluently and conducted interviews without the help of a translator, my long-standing experience with the

region still did not allow me a ready comprehension of local views in all instances. At times, therefore, I was left confused and pondering over the words of an interviewee for days or even weeks after the interview was completed. As I eventually realised, even the most basic categories about my research topic which I carried with me into fieldwork were categories that I could not impose on my data and which I was compelled to question.

This point is best illustrated by a description of language and definitions. The term 'domestic violence' is not a term that is frequently used among Tibetans in the study region; far more common are terms such as 'couple conflict,' 'argument,' and 'fighting.' Yet these latter terms do not specify whether the conflict in question is abusive or violent. At times, I specifically asked interviewees whether they believed their experiences to fall under the rubric of 'abuse.' However, the Tibetan terms which I am translating as 'abuse' within this article – namely '*nyee jee*' (བརྙས་བཅོས་) and '*thub tshol*' (ཐུབ་ཚོད་) – are terms that are not quite identical to the English term 'abuse.' These terms are probably more adequately translated into English as 'bullying,' since 'bullying' is a term in English that bears a connotation of somewhat lesser severity than 'abuse.' For simplicity, I have translated the terms '*nyee jee*' (བརྙས་བཅོས་) and '*thub tshol*' (ཐུབ་ཚོད་) as 'abuse' within this paper, so as to avoid the connotation with children, classmates, and school-based settings that often accompanies the term 'bullying' in English. The Tibetan term '*nar chol*' (མནར་གཅོད་) is more accurately translated as 'abuse' in English, but the two Tibetan terms listed earlier, namely '*nyee jee*' (བརྙས་བཅོས་) and '*thub tshol*' (ཐུབ་ཚོད་), were more frequently used in interviews than the term '*nar chol*' (མནར་གཅོད་). This is itself indicative of the ways in which my own paradigms did not quite fit with those of the women and men I interviewed. Even the vocabulary used to describe abusive situations is vocabulary that conceives of the incidents in question as somewhat less severe than the term I would use in English. Therefore, when I refer to interviewees as expressing that an action or situation is

'abusive,' I am actually referring to interviewees' use of a term that is expressing a concept somewhat less severe than the English term for 'abuse.'

Another example illustrating both my need to question my own paradigms and my initial confusion is seen in the story of one woman I interviewed. This woman escaped her husband's beatings by running out of her house in the cold of winter, and hiding outdoors until her husband fell asleep so that she could return to her house without fear. Her mother-in-law tried to compel her to continue undertaking labour even after she broke her arm, and often criticised her harshly. Her husband has beaten her many times, but during our interview she responded to the indignation I felt towards her treatment, apparent in my questions and body language, by expressing resistance to my reaction. She emphasised that there were a number of aspects of her marriage which she did not intend to complain about. She expressed that she is partially to blame for her household conflicts, that she does not always mind when her mother-in-law scolds her, and she believes her husband to be a good person and a good husband who treats her well. This interview left me at first pondering why this woman found my indignation to her treatment too strong, even though she had temporarily left her husband's home in anger several times. That is, not only did the contexts she described to me seem severe enough to warrant indignation, even her own actions implied indignation, as she had temporarily left her husband's home in anger, staying elsewhere for several days or weeks, on a number of occasions. Yet my reaction to her circumstances still appeared to this interviewee to be too strong.

Below, we explore participants' conceptions of intimate partner conflict, thereby looking to understand participants' views in more depth.

THE REALM OF THE ACCEPTABLE

Beating As A Form Of Discipline

For clarity, please note that I shall refer to both those individuals with whom I interacted informally during participant observation and non-victim interviewees as 'community members.' These individuals expressed a number of common views. However, these views did not arise

along distinct lines of gender, class, education, age, or residence. Rather, many views were expressed by individuals in a variety of social positions.

Community members repeatedly voiced the notion that beating is considered acceptable if a wife crosses the line – that is, if she is considered to have overstepped the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. For a number of community members, beating appeared to be seen as a means of socialising a woman into her proper role within the household. Thus interviewees described beating as acceptable if a woman falls asleep and thereby allows wolves to kill part of the household's herd of sheep, if the wife does not cook, if she does not like to do housework, if she has an extramarital affair, or if she irresponsibly leaves home often to have fun. One interviewee even expressed the view that extremely severe beating is acceptable as long as it is commensurate with the degree of transgression committed by a wife. "If the wife goes out and acts unruly…then even if the husband beats her to death it's okay, and people will say she deserves it," stated this interviewee (woman, resides in a town or city, education unknown, mid to late 30s).

Women who have themselves been hit or beaten often did not find severe beating or abuse acceptable. Yet they still felt, as did community members, that there were many conditions under which hitting or beating was acceptable. Thus, one woman went out with her friends and did not return home for several days. When she did return home, she said she knew she had committed a mistake and so she told her husband to hit her, which he did. One woman believed her husband's severe abuse was unacceptable, but also stated there were times when his beatings were justified. "Sometimes as soon as a guest arrived, I didn't immediately start cooking – there were times like this when [his beatings] were my fault," she said (resides in a town or city, educated until either high school or university, age 41). One woman complained that her husband beat her even though she worked hard to perform all her household duties. In this case, she believed she did not deserve to be beaten *because* she was performing her role well, stating "the situation made

me wonder why he had to [beat me] when I was working hard with the labour" (nomad, no schooling, age 22).

Beating In Response To Accusations And Argument

Some community members referred to speaking improperly as sufficient grounds for beating, a notion itself underpinned by norms that relative silence is often the proper mode of behaviour for women.[3] As stated by one participant, "if my father were not such a good person, he would certainly have beaten my mother. The reason is that my mother talks a lot. Whatever issue there is, she directly goes and tells you to your face without thinking" (man, resides in a town or city, middle school education, age 25). This participant believed the exceptional kind-heartedness of his father was the only barrier preventing his mother from being beaten. Others voiced the notion that a woman can be acceptably beaten if she accuses her husband or argues with him. As stated by one woman, for example, "I think it's good if you beat your wife a little. For the woman, if your husband has something to say, you stay quiet. When your husband doesn't have anything to say, if you say a few things, you'll argue" (woman, nomad, education unknown, age 44). One woman likewise responded to the fact that her friend was hit by her husband by telling her friend to stop complaining incessantly about her husband and to stop nagging him.

Similarly, wives who have been hit often felt hitting to be acceptable if they had challenged and accused their husbands or parents-in-law. One woman, for example, described her husband's beatings as occurring when her husband got drunk and when she got angry at him for his drinking habit. She expressed that the conflicts were both her and her husband's fault, and that her husband's beatings were understandable. This was her view, moreover, even though her husband beat her so hard that at times he caused her to faint. "I couldn't stay quiet. If I stayed quiet, he wouldn't have beaten me," she said (resides in a town or city, university educated, age 70). In one case, a woman considered herself acceptably beaten since she had shown indignation when her husband attempted to regulate her performance of housework. As this woman stated,

"When there's too much salt in the food…[my husband] says, 'This is too salty.' Then I might also get angry. When I say, 'Then why don't you cook?,' he hits me. This type of thing is a small matter. I don't consider that to be a big deal" (resides in a town or city, university educated, age 45).

Women in the above cases clearly believed conflict to have been engendered by both themselves and their partners. Rather than viewing themselves as victims of abuse perpetrated by others, they believed themselves to have equal responsibility as their husbands for the conflicts that occurred. This is therefore a view that does not utilise the 'feminist perspective,' and is instead in line with Leung's 'family perspective' on domestic violence, described above (2011).

Beating In Response To Mundane Conflicts

Several women considered beating acceptable when the physical violence was felt to be not too severe, and when conflicts were felt to be caused by small and mundane factors. We have seen, for example, the case of a woman, described above, who did not particularly mind when her husband hit her after she voiced indignation at his assertion that the food she cooked was too salty. Another woman felt the earlier part of her marriage, when her husband's beatings were less frequent and severe than they became later on, was a time when her husband's beatings were relatively acceptable. She explained by stating the following:

> When the two of us were doing work that required strength, if I bumped into him because I wasn't paying attention, he found the work too difficult for him so he beat me. Although he did that, I didn't get that angry. Once I cried, I let it go. I could quietly make my anger subside. (woman, resides in a town or city, educated up to high school or university, age 41)

In the above instances, beating was considered relatively unremarkable and mild, partly because the reasons behind the beatings were felt to be small and mundane.

Love And Care Despite Beatings

One point raised by interviewees was that a husband's beatings are relatively acceptable as long as the husband is working hard for his family, particularly with regards to providing financially for the family, or shows love and care for his wife, despite his beatings. One woman, for example, said her husband's beatings "didn't hurt me, because we loved each other" (woman, resides in a town or city, university educated, age 70). One woman believed she provoked her husband to beat her by suspecting him of infidelity without having any proof:

> I don't know if he's sleeping with other women or not but I just randomly get jealous…[My husband] is not wrong at all. He gets anxious easily and has a lot of anger so he beats me, but he's not wrong at all. He thinks of the family's difficulties and saves money…He beats me a little but he cares for me. (woman, farmer, no schooling, age 37)

Her views not only reveal the notion that her husband's beatings are relatively acceptable because he works hard to earn money for his family, but also that her own jealousy is actually to blame. This latter notion is itself underpinned by popular beliefs that women have an excessive tendency towards jealousy (ཙེ་རིང་སྒྲོལ་མ།[TseringDroma], n.d.; འཆི་མེད།[Chime], 2012; རྒྱ་ཡེ་བཀྲ་སྤྲོ།[GyayeTrabo], n.d.).

THE REALM OF THE UNACCEPTABLE

Violence Deemed Unnecessarily Excessive

While beating was often considered mundane and unremarkable[4], violence that was severe, frequent, or considered unnecessarily excessive in nature was considered unacceptable, both by women who have themselves experienced hitting and by community and family members. Some, for example, noted a man should only hit his wife on her body, but not her face, while one woman implied her husband's beatings were unacceptable because he beat her without paying attention to her safety. Some expressed particular concern when violence or abuse became so severe as to cause fear for the woman's life.

Material Deprivation

Similarly, the level of severity appeared to mediate whether women considered it acceptable or unacceptable when they were deprived of money or medical care. When husbands

or in-laws deprived a woman and her children of basic necessities such as food, this was always considered unacceptable. Such situations were considered unacceptable not only by the women who experienced such deprivation, but by the family members and friends of victims as well.

Beating To Humiliate, Scorn, Or Belittle

As stated by one community member, "Tibetans don't think beating in anger is abuse…since you beat because you can't control your anger. You didn't do it on purpose…Abuse is purposely giving a girl difficult work and beating her because she's from a poor family or is an orphan" (man, monk, middle school and monastery educated, possibly early 50s). For this community member, only deliberate and conscious attempts to treat a woman with scorn, for reasons *other* than socialising her into her 'proper' role within the household or reacting in anger to her argumentative words, is abusive.

In one case, the mother of a victim held similar views, considering beating to be unacceptable when her son-in-law's actions appeared aimed primarily at humiliating or belittling her daughter. The actions in question, in other words, appeared to perform the function of a power trip for the abuser. This case was described by the victim, who told the following story regarding a former incident between herself and her ex-husband:

> At that time I had just gotten married…[My husband] came [to my family's home] once he got vacation [from work]. When he came, we had some guests in our family home, and they were drinking and got a little drunk. After getting drunk, my husband called me. I was taking care of my mother. There were a lot of elders [there]. He made me do this and that. He made me take off his shoes, and tie his shoelaces. You felt like I was his slave…When the shoes weren't put on properly, I put them on [for him] again. My mother was watching and didn't like it…Then I didn't know why, but he kicked me. Then my relatives said they were leaving. They said, 'Let's end the evening here, rest well, and don't drink anymore.' When I saw my relatives out the door, he kicked me again, and I fell down. He hit me hard…and later it was swollen. Then my mother was

> angry and said, 'From now on, I am not giving you my daughter. Fuck off.[5] Your marriage to my daughter has ended.' (woman, resides in a town or city, middle school education, age unknown)

As this woman further stated, "I hated [my husband]. He likes to provoke you. He scolds and beats for no reason, and he was the same towards the kids." In this case, as we can see, the husband was not disciplining his wife for performing her role inadequately, nor did he react in anger when she was accusatory or argumentative with him. Rather, his actions were aimed at humiliation and ridicule, or alternatively were actions with aims that are not quite intelligible. His behaviour was therefore considered excessive, rather than acceptably aimed at appropriate discipline, by both the victim herself and the victim's relatives.

Emotional Abuse

Turning to the question of verbal and emotional abuse, women felt it was unacceptable when in-laws found fault with everything they did, constantly and excessively criticised their performance of household labour, or criticised their manner and appearance. One woman, for example, described the constant criticism suffered by her mother at the hands of her grandmother - her mother's mother-in-law. The interviewee described her grandmother as instigating her father to beat her mother, by constantly complaining that her mother did not perform her work adequately. "No matter which way [my grandmother] looked at something [my mother did], it wasn't pleasing to her eye," she said, adding later that "all [my mother] had to do was think of everything my grandmother did, and [she] really had tears streaming down her cheeks every day. She really thought she is the most wronged person on earth" (woman, resides in a town or city, educated up to high school or university, age 41).

One woman felt it was especially hurtful that her husband's family treated her like an outsider and a hired hand, even though she was working hard at the household labour. Her mother-in-law's threats to kick her out of the household were particularly hurtful to her. She described her mother-in-law's words as follows:

> [My mother-in-law] would scold me and say, 'You are poor and you don't know anything. Do you think I don't know what kind of family you have? Work properly. Otherwise nobody will want you. I don't know if you will be able to stay in my house or not.' (woman, resides in a town or city, no schooling, age unknown)

This quote is illustrative of the fact that telling a woman she has nowhere else to go, that she has arrived in her husband's home simply because nobody else wants her, or threatening a woman by telling her she may get kicked out of the household were felt by several informants to be abusive. Moreover, several women felt it was particularly hurtful or unacceptable when their husbands or in-laws criticised their natal families as poor or full of bad people. In addition, for women whose parents have passed away, bringing up the woman's dead parents was considered deeply hurtful and unacceptable.

Monetary Control And Regulation Of Daily Activities

Finally, women sometimes described post-divorce situations as situations in which they experienced newfound freedom. Their descriptions implied they felt regulation of their actions, such that they did not enjoy the freedom to choose their own daily activities, to have some control over money, or to visit friends and family when they wanted, to be abusive. One woman, for example, described her former life when married to her ex-husband as follows:

> I had to come home as soon as classes ended at [the] school [where I work as a teacher]. If I came back a little bit late, he would say, 'Why did you take so long? Yesterday you arrived at 12:10. Today you've arrived at 12:15. What did you do for five minutes?'…Even when my friends would go to the tea house to chat, he would follow us and sit nearby. After dark, he would quietly stand outside the window and listen. Oh my god. That was worse than being in chains. Compared to that, when he beat me it didn't hurt that much. (woman, resides in a town or city, university educated, age 45)

In this case, the interviewee is describing micro-regulation of her daily activities as far worse than the beatings she suffered, even though she experienced numerous and severe beatings.

RE-EVALUATING THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Aspects of marital relations not usually included within scholarly definitions of abuse were raised by interviewees as deeply harmful, unacceptable, or abusive. As a result, my understanding of the scope and definition of the problem expanded as fieldwork and data analysis progressed.

Excessive Burden Of Labour

At times, victims and community members listed placing a woman under an excessive burden of labour as unwarranted and unacceptable. Sometimes husbands or in-laws neglected to undertake much household labour, such as tending to the farm or to the family's herd of livestock, leaving wives under an excessive burden. In some cases a husband spent his days playing basketball or hanging around the nearest county town or township seat, while his wife was left struggling to make up for her husband's negligence.

Abandonment, Gambling, And Financial Irresponsibility

In some cases, a man decided he was in love with another woman, left his wife and children to live with his lover, and simply did not return home. In these cases, the husband sometimes stayed away from home for several days in a row, several months, or even years. Wives in these cases were often left waiting and hoping for their husbands to return, hoping they did not need to separate their children from a parent, hoping they would not need to suffer the stigma of divorce, or hoping their husbands would return to provide financially for the family. One woman who faced such abandonment at the hands of her first husband stated, "My first husband made me have deep resentment for him" (woman, resides in a town or city, university educated, age 70). Such views result in part from the fact that patrilocally married women do not always have acceptable alternatives to marriage, and therefore cannot always divorce or leave their husbands' households easily, an outcome of both economic and social constraints.[6] Let us note, moreover, the particular divergence from Western academic conceptualisations of abuse displayed here. In Western conceptions, separation and lack of contact between two intimate

partners should signal the end of abuse. In local conceptions, lack of contact signals a serious problem and a form of marital mistreatment.

Community members likewise spoke of the difficulties women faced when abandoned or when husbands wandered around and wasted away the household finances. In some cases, a husband continued to live with his wife and may even have undertaken some of his household responsibilities, but threatened the financial ruin of his family by gambling excessively. In such cases, some felt the man's careless tendency to push his family into a situation of potential financial ruin was the truly unacceptable behaviour, with beating in these cases considered relatively unimportant and entirely beside the point.

Frequently voiced by community members was the view that a combination of behaviours, usually involving a man's gambling, drinking, wasting away the household wealth, wandering around to have fun, neglecting his household labour, and beating his wife, together form a situation that is unacceptable and abusive. Often beating in these cases was described as beating one's wife 'for no reason.'

SOURCES OF SURVIVORS' TRAUMA

Women who experienced more severe and lasting abuse, particularly those whose marriages reflected patterns akin to Evan Stark's 'coercive control,' felt deeply traumatised by their experiences. Those women who suffered under an excessive burden of labour, serious material deprivation, or who suffered from the constant criticism of husbands or in-laws were also the women who expressed a sense of lasting trauma. Women who did not live in constant fear or who felt their husbands were caring or working hard for the household did not generally express a sense of deep and lasting trauma, even when they were periodically beaten. My exchange with one woman is illustrative:

Q: Did you stay quiet or did you speak in anger to him when he beat you?

A: I continued to scold him…

Q: Were you not afraid of him?

A: I wasn't afraid. If I were afraid, would I dare to scold him like that? I wasn't afraid and I spoke. (woman, resides in a town or city, university educated, age 70)

As this interviewee further described, her late husband's beatings were at times severe, and her conflicts with her husband caused her to feel temporarily unhappy. However, she still felt his beating were rather tolerable. This woman expressed that she was unhappy at the times her husband beat her, but it did not create lasting harm to her emotional well-being. "When he beat me, I suffered. When we conflicted, I wasn't happy," she stated, but also added that "[his beatings] didn't hurt me, because we loved each other." Her descriptions indicate she did not live in constant fear of her husband, and his beatings were not especially traumatic for her.

DISCUSSION

The similarities in view between female victims and non-victim community members are striking. The notion that beating is often mundane and normal, that beating is acceptable if a wife commits a mistake or does not properly perform her role, and that beating can be deserved if a woman speaks in an argumentative manner were found among both these groups of interviewees. Additionally, beating a woman when she is working hard for the household, or alternatively beating her for no reason, were considered unacceptable among both groups. Finally, beating was less acceptable when it was more severe, as was material deprivation. Such views often lay in tandem with broader community norms as expressed not only by study informants but also by authors of Tibetan language publications and within local proverbs.

Individual variation, however, is clearly apparent. Interviewees varied regarding which particular actions they felt were acceptable or unacceptable. One woman, for example, felt it was acceptable to beat a woman if she "acts in a shameless way towards her husband," but did not find it acceptable for a wife to be beaten "because you say she hasn't cooked the food well" (woman, resides in a town or city, possibly no schooling, age 47). One man defined abuse as a type of situation in which "if your wife rides a horse and goes to listen to a [religious] lecture…you beat her [for this]." As he went on to say, "If…my daughter [were in this type of

situation], I would tell her not to stay [with her husband] and bring her home" (man, resides in a town or city, elementary school education, age 60). One interviewee believed beating was only acceptable in the case of a wife's infidelity. Others, however, believed beating was acceptable if the wife spoke with too much anger or if she made a serious mistake when performing her household labour. Some even stated women should not instigate conflict by suspecting their husbands of marital infidelity or confronting their husbands about infidelity. This individual variation, however, did not follow identifiable patterns of age, gender, or education. Divergence of views, therefore, could not be predicted along these lines. Moreover, despite individual variation, virtually no interviewees challenged the notion that men have the right to beat their wives *when necessary.*

Women who have been hit by their partners focused on the unacceptability of excessive criticism, verbal assaults on the character of their natal families, bringing up the fact that a woman's parents have passed away, actions aimed at belittling or humiliation, deprivation of food and basic necessities, and constant and daily micro-regulation of their activities. Telling a woman she can be kicked out of the household at any moment, even when she is working hard at her household labour, was also felt to be abusive. In a few cases, as expressed by community members, placing a woman under an excessive burden of labour was felt to be unacceptable. In addition, some women victims as well as some community members voiced the view that abandoning one's wife for an extended period of time is a more serious problem than beating.

Thus, in no way did women who have been hit focus on the unacceptability of beating alone. In fact, they sometimes considered hitting to be a relatively small matter. While instances of hitting or beating did cause them to feel unhappy, they sometimes felt these instances caused a passing sense of unhappiness or unpleasantness rather than deep or lasting trauma. In short, within the study setting, the fact that a woman is beaten by her husband does not necessarily indicate she believes herself to have been wronged. This was especially the case within

relationships that encountered less severe abuse overall. We have seen, for example, that some women who were hit tended to justify beating if they were not living in fear of their partners.

When I started fieldwork, I was able to strictly and clearly delineate between non-abusive argumentation and abusive or violent intimate partner conflict. I had inherited this conceptualisation of intimate partner relationships as well as the vocabulary to express it from my mother tongue (English), my culture, and my academic readings. However, my categories and paradigms were not the same as those I encountered in the field. Not only did my view of what constitutes abuse differ from the individuals I interviewed, even my conceptualisation of the term 'abuse' is a conceptualisation that understands the issue to be somewhat more severe than the interviewees to whom I spoke. Moreover, my notions regarding the factors encompassed in abuse expanded during fieldwork, to include placing a woman under an excessive burden of labour, abandonment, and neglect. Finally, while I was initially confused by some interviewees' seemingly ready and inexplicable acceptance of periodic, even severe, beatings at the hands of their husbands, by listening more deeply to interviewees' expressions, I was able to discover some of the rationale behind their words, and eventually it no longer seemed as inexplicable. When women said certain instances in which they were hit did not deeply hurt them, or when they told me they were angry or unhappy in the moment of being beaten but quickly forgot about it afterwards, they were expressing to me that their experiences were unpleasant and unhappy, but not deeply traumatic. This is perhaps akin to the way I myself would feel if I entered into a heated verbal argument with my partner but was not abused by him.

Most importantly, the data of the current study suggests academic theories on domestic violence are often incommensurate with women's experiences of abuse in the study setting. Let us recall that Evan Stark has advocated for the term 'coercive control' to replace 'domestic violence', and he defines coercive control as a process by which perpetrators micro-regulate victims' daily activities; are unpredictable in their aggression, thereby leaving victims constantly fearful and 'walking on egg shells'; monitor victims' activities through stalking or listening to

phone calls and checking belongings; and restrict partners' movement and contacts through cutting off access to money, transportation, or opportunities to meet friends and family. Stark argues that severe and frequent violence is often a part and parcel of coercive control, but physical violence is not always necessary to enact pervasive oppression of victims. Moreover, he argues physical violence should not be the main focus of our attention. Rather, liberty restrictions and the extent of control over victims' daily lives is the most harmful and fundamental aspect of coercive control (2007). The current study's data leads to a similar conclusion, namely that for victims, beating is not exactly the point. However, what we find from the data presented here is that the pattern of behaviours termed 'coercive control' is also not always the point. Within the current study's data, coercive control is clearly a sufficient elucidation of the abusive dynamics involved in the most severe cases, particularly when those cases involved a husband as the sole or primary perpetrator, and the couple in question were in a nuclear family living arrangement. These were cases of men asserting their perceived right to masculine dominance and control over female partners. Other cases, however, did not align with all the patterns of coercive control. At times, this was because the husband was not the sole or even primary perpetrator, as extended family living arrangements led to several family members in effect abusing a woman concertedly. In other cases, an excessive burden of labour or abandonment and neglect were the only forms of abuse a woman suffered. In these latter types of cases, domestic violence was neither primarily about beating, nor was it primarily a matter of male perpetrators attempting to assert dominance and control for the sake of securing their perceived right to masculine entitlement and power over female intimate partners. While male privilege played an important role in these cases, this was not the sole mechanism behind abuse. In some cases, women appeared to be abused because of a kind of selfish lack of concern for a wife or daughter-in-law on the part of parents-in-law, sisters-in-law, or husbands, leading to neglect of household work such that a woman was left with an excessive burden of labour. In some cases, mothers-in-law appeared to be operating on material and economic motives,

expecting labour from a new wife for the benefit of the household's material conditions. This is rather different from abuse occurring because of men's attempts to assert their masculine dominance over wives. While both types of abuse reflect the gendered low status of some women, they follow somewhat different dynamics and patterns.

We have arrived at a point at which it is sometimes the case that neither the definition nor the scope of domestic violence, as I had understood it when first beginning fieldwork, are a proper fit for abuse as it occurs in the study setting. This is primarily because of the specifics of abuse within extended family living arrangements and abuse manifested in abandonment or in an excessive burden of labour. Young calls for suspending our assumptions and contends we need to guard against tendencies to try to fit others' views into our own paradigms, while Butler emphasises the mutual transformation of ideas and values that can occur via cross-cultural dialogue (Hutchings, 2013). Here, in line with the calls of these scholars, my conceptualisation of the problem has undergone a fundamental shift and expansion.

Adaptive Preferences?

As a feminist from the global North, it is natural for me to consider a man's hitting or beating of his female intimate partner to be abusive. As we have seen, the Tibetan women with whom I interacted did not always feel this way. Yet how am I and other Northern feminists working in a cross-cultural context to stay true to a feminist ethic that decries oppressive treatment of women while also refraining from being so patronising, ethnocentric, or superior as to tell women in another setting that their own understanding of their experiences is inaccurate? One answer to this question is to take the view of 'adaptive preferences,' in which oppressive circumstances cause individuals to have limited wishes and desires. This is the notion that individuals do not *really* want what they say they want. Rather, the idea is that their desires have been modified by the limitations of an underprivileged life. States Sen:

> Our desires and pleasure-taking abilities adjust to circumstances, especially to make life bearable in adverse situations…deprived people tend to come to terms with their

> deprivation because of the sheer necessity of survival, and they may, as a result, lack the courage to demand any radical change, and may even adjust their desires and expectations to what they unambitiously see as feasible. (Sen, 1999, p. 62)

If we apply this notion to the current study's findings, we would conclude that women do not really find it acceptable when they are hit or beaten, but instead say it is acceptable because they do not dare wish for something better. The idea of something better, within this notion, appears to the women in question to be a pipe dream, something totally unrealistic. Other scholars have proposed a similar notion, within which experience of abuse and lack of options to escape from abuse compel women to justify and accept their circumstances. Mogford, for example, notes that "studies that measure women's tolerance of abuse as a determinant of their experience of abuse generally find a positive relationship." As Mogford additionally states, moreover, "The causal direction of effect is ambiguous…because a woman's experience of abuse may 'teach' her to accept norms of justification" (2011, pp. 840–841). One study of women in Egypt found women who have experienced domestic violence are more likely to justify hitting of wives than those who have not had this experience. Moreover, wives with much less schooling than their husbands and whose husbands were blood relatives were also more likely to justify wife-beating. The authors hypothesise that "the families of such women may prioritize reconciliation because of their vested social and economic interests in the union. If less schooled and endogamously married women are less able to leave a violent partner, they may internalize the view that such violence is justified" (Yount & Li, 2009, p. 1136).

In the current study's setting, however, women's views echoed those of men and community members. One is left with the impression, therefore, that rather than being 'taught' to accept abuse by perpetrators who abuse them, victims are adhering to widely voiced and pervasively held community norms. These norms support and justify beating as a form of discipline of wives, as long as the beating in question is not enacted purely for the sake of ridicule or belittling, and as long as it remains at a relatively low level of severity. Therefore, I do not

believe that the notion of adaptive preferences or the notion that the experience of abuse 'teaches' victims to justify abuse are exactly accurate lenses through which to view this phenomenon in the study setting.

A Feminist Response?

Perhaps feminists from the global North intent on intervention or activism in this type of setting need to shift their aims away from the ways in which domestic violence interventions have been conducted in Northern settings, and instead focus upon those phenomena which Tibetan women victims themselves cite as most problematic. In this case, only phenomena such as an excessive burden of labour, abandonment by husbands, severe material deprivation, and life-threatening violence should be the focus of our attention and interventions.

However, it is clear that interviewees held to Leung's 'family perspective' on domestic violence, described above, wherein men and women are deemed equally responsible for conflict and violence. While I understand the rationale behind such a view, I have not seen reason to abandon my perspective, falling in line with Leung's 'feminist perspective,' in which violence is used as a means to maintain men's dominance and superior role within the household. Perhaps, then, Tibetan families and communities could benefit from interventions which aim to convince community members that physical violence is never justified and that a dismissive attitude towards wives is underpinned by gendered stereotypes, roles, and norms that need to be challenged at their root. Perhaps a Northern feminist perspective may be of some benefit in finding a solution.

Verweij et al. use the example of debates on climate change to illustrate their point that proposed responses to social and political problems often derive from normative foundations that cannot be proven or disproven by fact or evidence. Divergent policy proposals, they argue, stem from normative judgements regarding how social and economic relations should be organised in order to achieve "the good life" (Verweij et al., 2006, p. 16). Each perspective, moreover, tends to be underpinned by worldviews that "define what sort of evidence counts as legitimate fact and

what type of knowledge is credible." Documenting a few finite forms of social organisation which the authors theorise as underpinning, in various combinations, virtually all social arrangements worldwide, the authors argue that:

> Each way of organizing and perceiving [social relations] distils certain elements of experience and wisdom that are missed by the others. Each way of organizing and perceiving provides a clear expression of the way in which a significant portion of the populace feels we should live with one another and with nature. Each one needs all the others in order to be sustainable. (Verweij et al., 2006, p. 6)

Verweij et al. are contending that no one view is entirely right or wrong, a point made by Butler as well (Hutchings, 2013). As a result, Verweij et al. call for "a way of escaping from the idea that, when we are faced with contradictory definitions of problem and solution, we must choose one and reject the rest" (2006, p. 19). Even when different perspectives rest on fundamentally divergent beliefs regarding how society should be organised and how individuals should relate to each other, argue the authors, a "clumsy solution" amenable to all can be found. Such a solution would not follow a singular logic, but would instead represent significant compromise by all parties, offering something to appease and adhere to the worldview of each group. "In the end," state the authors, "the case for clumsiness rests on the idea that a limited number of collective ways of organizing and thinking exists, each with its particular strengths and weaknesses" (Verweij et al., 2006, p. 22).

My proposal is that we build upon the type of deep listening that I have attempted to undertake and demonstrate within this article. In the event that positions cannot be entirely reconciled, as has occurred in my own case, it may be useful to adopt the contention of Verweij et al. Perhaps, therefore, there is more wisdom in Leung's 'family perspective' on domestic abuse than I currently understand. Perhaps there is no way that I could ever veer from my 'feminist perspective' on intimate partner violence without a profound shift in worldview, something that is unlikely to occur. In any case, perhaps the outcome of dialogue, if it is to be successful, must

necessarily be an intervention that speaks to both the family and the feminist perspectives, offering something of value to adherents of both views.

Alternatively, while I might aim to convince communities in the study region to adopt a more feminist perspective, perhaps the pervasiveness of the family perspective in this setting will lead community members to reject my exhortations. As I have argued elsewhere[7], feminist interventions undertaken by community outsiders can only be ethical if they adhere to a number of principles, one of which is advocacy that is fully absent of coercion. Such advocacy would be undertaken in a manner that would allow local individuals to easily ridicule or dismiss proposed novel views.

CONCLUSION: THE TIBETAN CONTEXT AND THE WIDER WORLD

We might consider the northeastern Tibetan plateau a specific cultural region in which the dynamics of domestic abuse should be viewed as distinct from domestic abuse dynamics elsewhere. Certainly, some of the findings listed here have not been highlighted in studies of domestic abuse conducted in other parts of the world. Abuse manifested in an excessive burden of labour placed upon a woman, or abusing a woman by making her fearful to eat to her fill, for example, may be incarnations of abuse specific to the study setting. In addition, the data described above implies elders, parents in particular, often have a lot of power to support or encourage divorce in the event of abuse, or to pressure abusive husbands to stop their violence. This will certainly impinge upon the dynamics of domestic abuse in the study setting.[8] However, burden-of-labour abuse may be found in those parts of the world where women live under a larger burden of manual labour than men, as the Food and Agriculture Organization found was the case in rural areas of a variety of developing countries (Doss et al., 2011). Moreover, to my knowledge, while an in-depth exploration of survivors' conceptions of abuse has not been previously undertaken in the literature, studies from areas such as eastern China, Kenya, South Africa, Kuwait, and Egypt indicate that in many parts of the world wife-beating is often considered acceptable in the event of a wife's 'transgression' (Fisher, 2013; Kim & Motsei, 2002;

Lee, 2014; Leung, 2011; Nayak et al., 2003; Odero et al., 2014; Yount & Li, 2009). This suggests that parallels between the Tibetan setting and other areas of the world are likely. The aim of this paper, therefore, has been to describe local conceptions of abuse, as a lens into local conceptions will be useful not only for those working in a Tibetan setting but for those working in other settings around the world where similar views are also found.

While wider community norms have been described, the feelings of women victims of intimate partner violence have been most emphasised in this paper. Victims' concerns are most important from a feminist ethical perspective, while their outlook is also crucial in terms of designing adequate and effective interventions or programmes to mitigate the harms of abuse. In addition, this paper has stressed the need for suspending paradigms and assumptions when engaging in cross-cultural research on a topic as sensitive and contingent as violence against women, and has attempted to illustrate how such research may be carried out.

NOTES

1 The following works are some examples: Cascardi & Vivian, 1995; Dobash & Dobash, 2008; Fisher, 2013; Freeman, 2008; Gilchrist & Kebbell, 2004; Kilpatrick, 2004; Krug et al., 2002; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2010; Olson & Lloyd, 2005; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Straus et al., 1996

2 The following works are some examples: Boesten, 2006; Carlson & Worden, 2005; Clark, Silverman, Shahrouri, Everson-Rose, & Groce, 2010; Flood & Pease, 2009; Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005; Gilchrist & Kebbell, 2004; Giorgio, 2002; Johnson, 2008; Mogford, 2011; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Pleck, 1987; Poupart, 2003; Raj, Livramento, Santana, Gupta, & Silverman, 2006; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Stanko, 2008; Swan & Snow, 2002; Villarreal, 2007; Wright & Benson, 2010; Yount & Li, 2009

3 According to a number of study participants and informants, women are taught by mothers, elders, and peers to refrain from much speech, especially when in front of men (Kleisath, 2007)

or when men are discussing household decisions. As stated by one woman who described her upbringing in a Tibetan village, "As I grew older…[w]hen I wanted to speak, in my mind I would imagine Mother's voice or see the reproachful gaze of neighbors. To be a 'good girl,' I became very quiet and sensitive to what people thought about me, until I could no longer speak in front of a group of men" (Kleisath, 2007, p. 115). In addition, common derogatory statements aimed at silencing women include statements such as 'women will say all sorts of things,' or 'the words of dogs and women.' Newly married brides are meant to display a comportment of particular modesty and silence, furthermore, as emphasised by the proverb, 'The bride who speaks too early and the one-year-old dog that barks too early' (མནའ་མ་གྱཱས་མ་ཐུ། ཁྱི་དང་ཟླཱ་མ་ཐུ།). As described by one female university professor, when her female students are successful or confident enough to vocally assert their opinions, they can be ridiculed by male classmates for their lack of adherence to a norm of silence and lack of achievement for women.

4 One man, for example, stated, "Of course I've hit [my wife] a little. There aren't couples where there isn't a little beating" (man, nomad, age 34). One woman, who has herself been beaten by her husband, answered, "Yes. Of course," when I asked if her siblings and friends had experienced a bit of hitting (woman, resides in a town or city, age 70).

5 This interview was conducted in Chinese. The original Chinese sentence here translated as 'fuck off' is 你滚。

6 For more information on the material, economic, and social constraints faced by women in the study region due to patrilocal marriage, please see my article in *Genus: Journal of Population Sciences* (Rajan, 2014).

7 Forthcoming article entitled *The Ethics of Transnational Feminist Research and Activism: An Argument for a More Comprehensive View*.

8 A more detailed exploration of the impact of extended family living arrangements on domestic violence in the study setting is beyond the scope of this article. Please see a previous article of mine for an in-depth assessment of this issue (Rajan, 2014).

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