Beyond the Perpetrator: Tackling the Varied Underpinnings of Domestic Violence on the Tibetan Plateau

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INTRODUCTION

Part 1: Overview

This thesis explores domestic violence (DV) on the northeastern edge of the Tibetan plateau, in Qinghai province of the People's Republic of China (PRC). (See Appendix 1 for maps of the study region.) It is based on fifteen months of fieldwork conducted in 2012 and 2013, and upon interviews with 100 women and men, participant observation, and a reading of local proverbs, song, and popular literature. As this is a thesis by publications, three stand-alone articles dealing with selected aspects of domestic violence (DV) in the study region, plus two articles dealing with social phenomena closely related to DV, are included in the subsequent pages.

DV is a problem of global reach, found in every region of the world, a regrettably enduring social blight with serious negative effects on individuals and families. Many theorists describe this blight as a product of gendered roles and ideas in the wider society which disadvantage

women relative to men.[1] It is even fair to say that all of society's members are implicated in DV, as we all collectively perpetuate a society with sexist norms and values.[2]

Readers might be tempted to ask why DV should be considered a question of particular import in the Tibetan communities of the study region. Why, one might ask, should one choose to study this problem here? To answer this question, I should begin by describing the winding path, marked by a particular life trajectory, which led me to this research project.

A long-standing interest in both Tibetan and Chinese culture and politics led me, upon the conclusion of undergraduate studies, to first live and work in the city of Nanjing, in eastern China, for approximately a year and a half, then in Qinghai province, or Tso-ngon (མཚོ་སྔོན་) as the region is called in Tibetan, where I lived for another three years, first working as an English teacher in a Tibetan-medium high school, and later as a staff person in an NGO, where I both trained the staff in English writing skills and worked on public health projects in Tibetan townships and nomadic settlements. When I first arrived in Tso-ngon, I was fluent in Chinese, as I had begun studying the language five years earlier, and as my time in Nanjing had greatly

[1] The prevalent academic understanding of the causes, consequences, and dynamics of DV derives largely from the feminist movements that surged in countries such as Britain, Canada, and the United States in the 1970s, and from the research, activist, and policy work that has been conducted in these countries since then (Fricker, 2007; Hester, 2005; Pleck, 1987; Stark, 2007; Walker, 1990). Feminists and DV researchers are deeply indebted to these activists of the 1970s, as our paradigms are often built upon the groundbreaking investigations and realisations they developed.

[2] My usage of the term 'sexism' derives from Nancy Fraser's definition. "Cultural sexism," for Fraser, means "the pervasive devaluation and disparagement of things coded as 'feminine', paradigmatically – but not only – women." Sexism manifests in a range of social phenomena, such as "sexual assault, sexual exploitation, and pervasive domestic violence; trivializing, objectifying, and demeaning stereotypical depictions in the media; harassment and disparagement in all spheres of everyday life; subjection to androcentric norms in relation to which women appear lesser or deviant and which work to disadvantage them, even in the absence of any intention to discriminate; attitudinal discrimination; exclusion or marginalization in public spheres and deliberative bodies; and denial of full legal rights and equal protections" (1995, p. 79).

enhanced my fluency. I had also taken a Tibetan language course some years previously, allowing me basic conversational ability in the Lhasa dialect, which was not well understood in 'Amdo', the traditional designation of one region of the Tibetan plateau, of which the study area is a part. During these three years in Tso-ngon[3], I spent the majority of my free time learning the local Amdo dialect of Tibetan. I was especially fortunate to work at an NGO where almost all my colleagues were Tibetan, allowing me to spend all day, every day steeped in a Tibetan-language environment, which proved extremely useful for further enhancing my fluency and comprehension. As for my social life outside of work, I did my best to speak as little English as possible, and to be always surrounded by Tibetan friends and a Tibetan-language environment. Returning to the United States for a week or two to visit my parents seemed, at the time, an entry into an alternate universe. During these visits home, I felt suddenly surrounded by people whose awareness of Tibet was minimal, and I had to abruptly transition into speaking English from morning til night.

While I did my best to immerse myself in Tibetan society, and while my subsequent visits and fieldwork add up to six and a half years in total spent in the region, I remain always, of course, an outsider, a foreigner in Tibet. My understanding of Tibetan life in the study region is never complete, and it was in part my awareness of this fact that led me to this research project.

At first, as the time I spent living in the region lengthened, I became slowly more and more aware of an impression which I found troubling - that not only was DV widespread among Tibetans, it was considered acceptable as well. For example, a Tibetan friend told me about his sister, who was periodically beaten by her husband. The husband had a habit of spending time

[3] I lived in three different locations within the province during these three years.

with his wife's parents and showing care for them after a beating. Later, if the wife told her parents she had been beaten or if the beating came to light, the wife's father supported his son-in-law, believing his son-in-law was the correct party with regards to the couple's conflict. According to my friend, the husband subtly convinced his father-in-law to take his side by taking on the mannerisms of a man who cares for his parents-in-law, that is, the mannerisms of a 'good son-in-law'. To me, at the time, having had only approximately two years of exposure to local life, the father's behaviour in this case seemed shocking. That a father would support the man beating his own daughter seemed beyond the pale to me. At another point, a Tibetan friend of mine whose sister-in-law frequently started arguments with him was told by this sister-in-law's father to simply hit her if she became annoying. This statement did not seem to register as especially noteworthy to my friend, who also told me that his wife's family was without proper regulation and unruly, because the women of the family did not have many men relatives living with them; as a result, I was told, the women were under no one's control. These are only two of the many stories I came across in daily life while living in Tso-ngon. When I expressed opposition to the ideas I heard which were accepting of DV, however, I sometimes received looks of incredulity or words of dismissal in response.

Once, when spending time with my Tibetan colleagues, they joked about a woman working at one of the branch offices of our organisation. This woman denied that she was dating a man also working at the same branch, but the others did not believe her. Once, when this man and woman began arguing, the man raised his hand as if to hit her. My colleagues took this event as proof that the two were in fact dating. Rather than find the situation disturbing, my colleagues found it amusing. That is, the fact that this woman denied she was dating the man was amusing to my colleagues, given that the man's threat of violence proved, in their eyes, that the two were in fact

in a relationship. At the time, I experienced these kinds of conversations as disturbing and appalling.

I arrived at this research project, therefore, in part from an activist motive. At the NGO where I worked, for example, during the English trainings I conducted for the staff, the topic of classroom discussion often revolved around social problems existing in both the US and China. A couple of times, our conversations turned to violence against women. To a response of shocked faces among the staff members, I told the class that I would leave any partner of mine were he to hit me even once. I think my words at the time derived from an activist intention: while I did not expect the staff to agree with me, I wanted them to simply hear that such a view was possible, that zero tolerance towards violence in relationships is a serious opinion which a reasonable person might hold.

Of course, my statement did not expressly take into account the myriad circumstances and constraints which understandably keep women in abusive relationships. Moreover, being hit a single time is not necessarily the same as being severely abused; the entire context of a relationship and the circumstances surrounding any single instance of hitting must be understood if we are to analyse whether or not severe abuse is occurring. However, I relay this anecdote here in order to express, as honestly as possible, a part of the driving force behind my interest in this research project. My anecdote may raise questions about ethics and paternalism, as a Western feminist such as myself may fall into the trap of viewing Tibetan society in a condescending manner. Throughout this DPhil, I have pondered this question of transnational feminist ethics - how transnational feminist research and activism should be done, and whether it should be done at all, given the dangers of racist or ethnocentric approaches to global South

societies inherent in transnational feminist work. Article 1 (*The Ethics of Transnational Feminist Research and Activism*) grapples with this issue in depth, and I hope the conclusions I have reached are satisfactory.

As noted above, then, when reacting to the DV I sensed was common in the study region, my first instinct was an activist one. I wanted to impart the notion, to whoever might care to listen, that we do not have to live this way; we do not need to rule over each other in our personal relationships, that greater equality is possible. Admittedly, I am still interested in this type of activity, and during fieldwork, at the invitation of a local women's group, I spoke at a few classes and workshops to impart information about feminist thought and ideas. However, prior to commencing my DPhil, I hesitated to dive directly into a full-blown activist project, primarily for one reason. This was that, as an outsider, as a foreigner, I did not feel able to rest easy in my knowledge of Tibetan society, even though I had lived in the region for several years and spoke the local languages. Were I to plan an activist project in my own home community, I would have been less reticent, but I knew how easy it can be for foreigners to make mistakes and undue assumptions in our assessment of Tibetan practices and social trends. I wanted to truly understand how DV in this region works, for without such an understanding an adequate response could not be formulated. At the same time, I had an inkling that virtually no local groups or community leaders were heavily focused on tackling the issue of DV or other forms of violence against women in a public, sustained manner, a suspicion that was confirmed by my subsequent research (as shown in Article 5, *The Discourse of Tibetan Women's Empowerment Activists*). My research findings, however, can be used by local women's groups, policy actors, and by local and international NGOs, if and when a serious interest in tackling this question arises within local communities.

As my DPhil progressed, my interests began to centre on academic theory, and on the links that might be made with other world regions. I realised the study region can offer an important case study to supplement existing knowledge, data which can begin to fill gaping holes in our current literature and understandings. Firstly, household marriage arrangements, encompassing who marries who and which in-laws live together following a marriage, display significant diversity in this region, offering a unique opportunity to look into women's power and status within the home in a variety of household arrangements. Decision-making patterns within the home also vary widely in accord with the circumstances of each household, despite a prevalent discourse that senior men should manage household finances and decisions. As a result, data from this region can allow for an exploration of the factors behind women's differential power within the home in various types of households. Article 3 (*The Impact of Household Form and Marital Residence on the Economic Dimensions of Women's Vulnerability to Domestic Violence*) covers this structural question, exploring the link between household marital form, women's status in the home, and women's vulnerability to DV.

Secondly, while literature from a wide array of locations around the world indicates DV is often considered acceptable, especially in the event of a wife's 'transgression' such as infidelity, the available literature does not cover an in-depth look into how women who have themselves been beaten view the acceptability or unacceptability of violence or other abusive acts. While undertaking fieldwork, I realised that situations defined in the academic literature as 'abusive' were not always seen in such a negative light by Tibetan survivors. I was repeatedly confronted with this fact and could not, in good faith, ignore it. I was compelled to ask myself the question, what counts as abuse, if various situations or circumstances are considered non-abusive and non-traumatic by survivors? Article 4 (*When Wife-beating is Not Necessarily Abuse*) grapples with

this question, describing why and how Tibetan women survivors consider some of their personal experiences as acceptable, and others as unacceptable, abusive, or traumatic. I believe this article will have parallels to many other parts of the world, and can hopefully help to direct researchers in their own questioning around this topic in other world regions.

Our discussion of Article 4 brings me to a primary theme underpinning this thesis, namely that, in the articles below, I am essentially reacting to U.S.- and Euro-centric DV theories, since these have left huge gaps in our comprehension of the problem in non-Western settings. The article mentioned above, for example, emphasises that assumptions cannot be made regarding which actions and circumstances are considered abusive. Instead, varying norms around interpersonal relationships in different communities must be taken into account. By adding data on women survivors' own views to the available literature, I hope to begin counteracting the silence on this topic in scholarly work, a silence which may amount to ethnocentric assumptions in the field of DV research generally.

The fact that DV within relatively autonomous nuclear family units is the dynamic most heavily described within the literature, furthermore, left me without available tools to adequately conceptualise abuse in the study setting, as various forms of marriage and extended family living arrangements are common here. Nor did much of the literature provide me with tools for a setting in which relationships are often underpinned by norms of age-derived status and of respect and deference towards higher status individuals. Instead, I had to piece together insights from different bodies of literature, coupled with my own data and analysis, to adequately conceptualise the problem. I found that a Western legalistic and individualistic understanding of agency, perpetration, crime, and blame has led to excessive individualism in theories of DV.

These understandings of humans as purely atomised and autonomous agents are not necessarily reflective of societies in which individuals are deeply intertwined with their communities and families, such that the entire community or family, and the totality of relational dynamics within it, is perhaps more to blame for family abuse than any one individual's choices (as explained in Article 2, *Coercive Control, Community Embeddedness, and Family Systems: Interrogating the Relevance of Domestic Violence Theory for the Tibetan Plateau*.). It is the embeddedness of abuse within extended family relations and within community social structures that led to the thesis title 'Beyond the Perpetrator.' For example, in the subsequent pages, I explore abuse perpetrated by in-laws and the complicated and multi-directional relational dynamics that can occur when extended families live together.

This thesis is thus aimed at providing a detailed illustration of when, why, and how available U.S- and Euro-centric conceptualisations of DV can prove false, and it seeks to begin filling the theoretical gaps in our understanding of gender-based violence in non-Western settings. This is a vital undertaking because many DV studies conducted outside of Western Europe and North America often implicitly and uncritically adopt prevalent U.S.-centric theories. Towards this end, I have grappled with the ways in which the conceptual paradigms I carried with me into fieldwork were incommensurate with the worldviews of the Tibetans I interviewed. And I have been compelled to address questions of transnational feminist ethics – that is, whether and under which kinds of circumstances an outsider such as myself has the right to label an individual a 'victim' or a situation as 'abuse,' as well as the circumstances under which external intervention might be said to be ethical (see Article 1, *The Ethics of Transnational Feminist Research and Activism*).

Finally, this study is distinctive in the methods it employs, a point which itself links to the contributions this research can make to the literature. These methods were not a matter of deliberate design, but were rather the methods I was compelled to adopt out of necessity. Available DV services in the study region do not always have a wide reach and are rarely utilised by Tibetans. This lack of dedicated services meant that I had no choice but to conduct interviews in the general population, rather than target my research to individuals I could pre-identify as survivors or perpetrators of DV. As a result, my study offers an in-depth qualitative investigation into women and men in the general population, something which is not generally found in the DV literature. The literature tends to be composed of, on the one hand, quantitative studies of samples representative of the general population or, on the other hand, qualitative studies of those seeking support from shelters, police, courts, or medical institutions. The qualitative studies thus tend to cover victims who have approached official or institutional bodies for logistical, legal, or medical help, and as a result, tend to reveal information on high-severity cases. In the quantitative data, on the other hand, a wide array of abuse severity is shown. This is not surprising because victims who access shelters, courts, police, and hospital emergency rooms are likely to be individuals who have faced high-severity abuse. My study, however, involving a qualitative investigation of individuals sampled from the general population (though not representatively sampled), offers in-depth data on both low- and high-severity cases. As such, it can offer important insights into a significant strand of DV literature, namely typologies of abuse as formulated by Michael Johnson (2006) and Evan Stark (2007). Unfortunately, time constraints prevented me from completing an article on this topic for inclusion in this thesis. An article on this subject is, however, currently in progress.

A second point of note is that, because this study utilised a purposive sample of women and men in the general population, a majority of the women I interviewed had not, in fact, suffered abuse. While my study is not designed to pronounce on prevalence[4], approximately 20% of the individuals I interviewed had perpetrated or received some abuse in the past. Those who had encountered circumstances of abuse, however, displayed a wide range of severity in DV experiences, ranging from a single slap enacted once over the course of a ten-year marriage to severe and life-threatening violence, and from occasional dismissiveness in husbands' words and actions to deeply hurtful verbal abuse. Abusive cases sometimes involved material/economic abuse as well, whether accompanied or unaccompanied by physical violence, such as the withholding of medical care or withholding food or money from the victim so as to cause frequent and ongoing hunger. Nevertheless, while robust quantitative prevalence information for the study region does not, to my knowledge, exist, we might take my data as a guide to indicate that DV is likely a minority phenomenon in the study region. This would be consistent with literature indicating DV is a minority phenomenon in various regions around the world (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005). That the majority of households in the study region may not engage in DV is a point requiring particular emphasis, as Tibetans have been stigmatised as backwards and uncivilised in state discourses (Barabantseva, 2009; Yi, 2005), and it is my hope that this thesis does not contribute to such ideas (see Article 1, *The Ethics of Transnational Feminist Research and Activism*, for a further discussion of this point).

Summary of Thesis Content

[4] This research is qualitative, and involved a purposive sample of 100 women and men, identified to provide a range of age, education, and residence criteria.

As noted above, this thesis is a thesis by publications, and is composed of five stand-alone articles. The first article (entitled "The Ethics of Transnational Feminist Research and Activism") arises from the fact that, as an American, I have striven to understand abuse in a context where my assumptions around norms and patterns of interpersonal relations are often incommensurate with the assumptions of interviewees. As I discovered during both fieldwork and post-fieldwork analysis, even to call DV a social problem can appear an imposition, a label derived from an alien set of norms that are not held within local communities. Confronted constantly with the question of how and whether I can justify labelling a phenomenon as a problem or as abuse when local conceptions would not do so, I found that the ethics of my research project, as well as the ethics of intending to create impact with my research, needed to be interrogated. The first article therefore delves into this question – the ethics of transnational feminist research and activist projects. This article attempts to dig deeper into the uncomfortable spaces raised by this question, deeper than current scholarship has thus far gone.

The second article (entitled "Coercive Control, Community Embeddedness, and Family Systems") draws upon one of the most influential theories of DV, developed from United States data by researcher Evan Stark, and interrogates the theory's usefulness in a Tibetan context. In this article, I argue Stark's contentions in some ways resonate very strongly with Tibetan experiences of abuse, revealing significant cross-cultural applicability. In other ways, however, the theory misses a host of salient elements that must be accounted for when attempting to conceptualise and understand DV in Tibetan and other similar non-Western contexts. This article argues for a new direction in DV theory, so as to move beyond U.S.-centric understandings, and suggests that such a move is likely to be useful for comprehending more types of abuse than is currently included within our understanding.

The third article (entitled "The Impact of Household Form and Marital Residence on the Economic Dimensions of Women's Vulnerability to Domestic Violence"), looks at the economic and material constraints which can cause women to be vulnerable to DV. In particular, in a setting in which nuclear-style families are a relatively new phenomenon, and where extended family living arrangements are very common, whether a woman is patrilocally, matrilocally, or neolocally married is pivotal in understanding how vulnerable she is to abuse. Her economic dependence on the larger household unit, often largely determined by ownership of land, is crucial, as is the possibility of abuse perpetrated by both husbands and in-laws. This article fills a gap in the literature by looking into the question of household marital form – that is, patterns within patrilocal versus matrilocal marriage arrangements. There is a dearth of information on linkages between DV and diverse marital forms, and this article begins to address this.

The fourth article (entitled "When Wife-Beating is Not Necessarily Abuse") explores how DV victims as well as community members and the friends and family of victims understand the concept of abuse. Much DV literature sidesteps the question of cultural difference in perceptions of abuse. The culturally contingent perceptions of victims themselves is especially under-explored. In this article, I look into victims' own views, and by dealing with this question through qualitative research, I am able to explore this topic in a way that is not common in the literature. This article also tackles the question of methodology, that is, how to deal with a context within which the researcher is a foreigner, and her fundamental assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation either do not hold or diverge significantly from the views of local women.

The fifth and final article (entitled "The Discourse of Tibetan Women's Empowerment

Activists") arose originally from a desire to understand why Tibetans active in private, non-profit efforts to empower women have not focused more on issues of gender-based violence. Feminist activism in other parts of Asia and the world has included a heavy dose of attention to violence against women. However, this type of activism appears non-existent in Tibetan regions of China. To understand why this is the case, I interviewed a number of local women's empowerment activists. As I discovered, the activists I interviewed feared the complete obliteration of Tibetan culture and identity. Activists' sense of crisis has resulted from Tibetans' numerical and economic weakness vis-à-vis Han Chinese, from governmental policies, and from state and institutional barriers to Tibetans' initiatives to preserve their language, religion, and culture. Within this context, the activists I interviewed were primarily concerned with preventing the complete loss of Tibetan identity, and subordinated feminist priorities in order to emphasise the task of strengthening the nationality. Activists' focus, therefore, rested on the strength of Tibetan communities at large rather than on ending belittling or demeaning treatment of women.

The first article of the thesis was recently accepted by *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society.* Its publication is forthcoming, slated approximately for January 2018. The second article is yet to be submitted. I hope to publish it in the journal Sex Roles. The third article has been published in *Genus: Journal of Population Sciences* (Rajan, 2014). The fourth article was recently accepted by the journal *Violence Against Women,* and it has been published online prior to its forthcoming print issue (Rajan, 2016). The fifth and final article was published in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines,* a Tibetan Studies journal (Rajan, 2015).

Part 2: Theoretical Background

Below is a review of the literature relating to this thesis, described in somewhat more depth than is possible within the space constraints of the subsequent stand-alone articles. The literature discussed here gives a general overview of the definition, dynamics, and terminology of DV, while touching also upon the potential causes behind in-law abuse in extended family households. Subsequent sections of this introduction cover background information on norms, roles, and discourses of gender prevalent in the study region (Part 3), parallels between gender roles and relations in the study region and other parts of the world (Part 4), background information on the political context of the region (Part 5), legal and institutional responses to DV in China (Part 6), and the study's research methods and approach (Part 7).[5]

Coercive Control

Evan Stark's book *Coercive Control: The Entrapment of Women in Personal Life* (2007) is effectively the foremost current theory describing the dynamics and patterns of intimate partner violence. Stark's work has significantly impacted both policy and research in the United States and Britain. For example, in 2009, the journal *Violence Against Women* published a special issue of essays entirely devoted to discussing Stark's new theory (Brush, 2009), in 2012 the U.K. government adopted the terminology of 'coercive control' to describe this social problem (Ministers for Women and Equalities, 2012), a new law criminalising 'coercive control' in the U.K. came into effect in late 2015 (Bowcott, 2015), and numerous academics as well as the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have used the concept of 'coercive

[5] Additional information can also be found in Appendix 4, covering theories of violence against women in underprivileged communities, and Appendix 5, covering recent feminist activism in eastern China.

control' to describe and understand the phenomenon in their research and statistics (Anderson, 2008; Hardesty et al., 2015; Jouriles & McDonald, 2015; Lehmann, Simmons, & Pillai, 2012; Villarreal, 2007; Walters, Chen, & Brieding, 2013; Williamson, 2010; Yount, Miedema, Martin, Crandall, & Naved, 2016). Stark's main argument is that physical violence should not be the central focus of our attention, as abusers use myriad tactics to control victims' everyday freedoms, and we must understand this problem as a process of entrapment, such that women are kept in hostage-like situations. Stark's conceptualisation in this vein is not especially new, as DV is widely considered to involve not only physical violence but also malicious attempts to assert power and control over a victim, and to include psychological, emotional, and financial abuse (Gilchrist & Kebbell, 2004; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Tjaden, 2004). Such conceptualisations of DV existed long before Stark's 2007 book, in fact (M. P. Johnson, 1995; Pence & Paymar, 1993). However, Stark clarifies and elaborates upon these pre-existing ideas, and his work is required reading for any analyst wishing to understand the current thinking on DV.

The book draws upon Stark's interviews with numerous women, interviews he conducted when working as an expert witness in DV-related court proceedings, and when undertaking his role "as an advocate, counselor, and forensic social worker" in the United States (2007, p. 4). Stark's interviewees have been beaten, raped, threatened, controlled, belittled, and severely humiliated by partners. Victims' hostage-like predicament can be seen in the fact that they are often denied adequate money or food, communication with friends and relatives, or access to means of transportation. Perpetrators also place victims under daily surveillance by routinely checking their belongings, monitoring their phone and internet use, and following the victim or enlisting others to follow her. In addition, victims tend to feel that perpetrators' anger is often quite

arbitrary and random, possible at any moment, leaving victims constantly 'walking on egg shells.' "[A]ny decision," states Stark, " – to return to school, take a job, seek legal assistance, start a diary, buy a new bra, even to cook something new – may be interpreted as a sign of disloyalty, independence, resistance, and worse, and so is permeated with a sense of dread" (2007, p. 209). The fact that perpetrators "[extend] behavioral regulation to all those settings where victims might restore their identity or garner support, including work, school, church, service, family, and shopping sites" shows that restricting the mundane and most basic freedoms of women is at the heart of coercive control (2007, p. 208). As Stark describes:

> In one case, the boyfriend, a police officer, not only had his spies monitor whom my client met or talked to at the mall but also went through her purchases, ripping up a blouse and see-through bra because they were too 'sexy.' Sarah's husband reviewed all phone messages on the answering machine when he came home, calling any number he didn't recognize and insulting the party. (Stark, 2007, p. 209)

As we can see in the above example, victims' experiences with abuse often serve to isolate them from friends and family. This isolation can result from abusers' conscious attempts to separate a victim from her social networks. In one case, for example, as Stark describes, "Frank often punished Donna for talking to people she saw. So she stopped talking to friends and relatives, even those she met accidentally on the street, limiting her social life to her immediate family" (2007, p. 295).

Microregulation is a part of the abuse victims suffer as well, and involves perpetrators' regulation of the minute details of victims' routine activities. As Stark explains, some women "had to answer the phone by the third ring," others were forced to "record every penny they

spent," and/or "dress, walk, cook, talk, and make love in specific ways and not others, always with the 'or else' proviso hanging over their heads" (2007, p. 15). Surveillance, microregulation, the establishing of numerous rules, and frequent punishment are therefore constant facets of victims' experience.

As Stark explains, "A perpetrator's moods may determine whether a victim will be allowed to sleep through the night, take her medicine, go to work in the morning, or purchase milk for the children...[To survive, she develops] an acute sensitivity to these moods" (2007, pp. 202–203). Faced with such extreme controls, readers might ask why women in abusive relationships do not simply leave their partners. The answer lies in the fact that women invariably face the prospect of escalating danger when planning to leave a perpetrator. Post-separation intimidation and violence is common, such that leaving an abusive partner is a risky move that may further jeopardise the safety of a woman and/or her children. Perpetrators often also place victims in a compromising position, one that reduces victims' chances of support, credibility, or escape (Stark, 2007).

One of Stark's most novel contributions is his notion that DV dynamics have changed over time. He contends that coercive control is a relatively new phenomenon. In the past, women's legal rights and opportunities for professional work and education were so restricted that women were often forced to be dependent on male partners. Since the feminist movement of the 1970s, women have gained many rights and opportunities, and cultural mores have also shifted. As a result, argues Stark, although the United States is by no means a gender-equal utopia, the gains obtained by the women's rights movement have left perpetrators in a position wherein they need to use much more extensive and complex tactics to gain the control over female partners they

believe to be rightfully theirs. Violence alone was once the primary tactic used by abusive men to enforce their domination over their heterosexual partners, Stark contends. Now, however, the method of choice is coercive control, or violence in addition to numerous nonviolent controlling tactics. While "certain immigrant and religious minorities" in the United States constrain women "to dependence in heterosexual partnerships by some combination of law, custom, and religion," many non-immigrant women in the United States no longer contend with a situation in which their "speech, dress, relationships, and behavior in civil society are controlled [by society]," and this is the result of women's achievements in "education, culture, [and] legal rights" (2009, p. 1513). As a result, physical violence alone is no longer sufficient to gain pervasive dominance over female partners, and abusive men turn to coercive control instead (Stark, 2007).

Cultural Constructs of Gender Asymmetry

Links between masculine notions of superiority to women and violence against women have been noted by many (Moser, 2004; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2008; Zurbriggen, 2010). When control, subordination, and brutalisation of women are both common in society and often met with acceptance or indifference (Dines & Long, 2011; Herbert, 2006; Logan & Raphael, 2007; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2008; Tong, 2009), and when notions of masculinity are fundamentally tied with leadership, dominance, and aggression, it is not surprising some men are socialised into believing they have the right to coercively control their female partners.

Stark describes that perpetrators tend to focus on regulating "behaviors associated with stereotypic female roles, such as how women dress, cook, clean, socialize, care for their children, or perform sexually" (2007, p. 5). Women's pervasive assignment to the culturally devalued status of domestic service is, therefore, both a primary site upon which perpetrators focus their

regulation and allows perpetrators to claim just cause to constrain women's mobility and activities (Anderson, 2009). As Stark further describes:

> To humiliate [his partner], Donald Rogers would repeatedly call her 'dirty,' criticize her for not bathing, and tell her 'you aren't shit' and 'all bitches are the same.' Treating a partner like an animal is a common degradation tactic: women in my practice have been forced to eat off the floor, wear a leash, bark when they wanted supper, or beg for favors on their knees. On several occasions, Mickey Hughes rubbed food all over Francine's face and hair after dumping it on the floor. (Stark, 2007, p. 259)

Importantly, abuser's tactics revolve around degrading partners *because* they are women. For abusers, explains Stark, "the feminine represents what is irrational, emotional, and immoral," and these beliefs result in perpetrators ridiculing women's daily actions and behaviour. Thus, as Stark explains:

> By contrasting their own propensity for reasoned and rational argument to their partners' 'crazy' views and behaviors, controllers build an elaborate pseudo-logic out of sarcasm, disdain, and insult that they then bring to bear on judgements about women's everyday behaviour…Righteous men take the moral or religious rather than the intellectual high ground…and [the victim] is punished for being bad or evil. (Stark 2007 p. 281)

Perpetrators therefore use wider cultural discourses to show disdain for female partners. These are discourses which contend women have a tendency to be emotional, while men are considered to have a tendency to be more rational, or which associate femininity with moral degradation. "To display their skill at reasoning," Stark further explains, "batterers subject their partners to

endless monologues and 'lessons,' often keeping them awake or making them stand through an entire night" (2007, p. 282).

As we have seen, beliefs regarding the nature of masculinity and femininity are implicated in coercive control. Coercive control in heterosexual partnerships is about using a victim's femininity against her, that is, using an individual's devalued status as a woman to control, subordinate, and humiliate her. It builds upon patterns of control, subordination, and brutalisation of women within society at large, and is about attacking and controlling a woman on the basis of her very womanhood.

Limitations of Coercive Control

Stark's theory has been politically and academically influential. This fact, in addition to the eloquence and salience of the theory, led me to rely primarily upon this work to conceptualise and understand DV prior to fieldwork. However, I was skeptical of Stark's arguments around history. While his historical argument about shifts in the prevalent shape of DV in the United States is based on a lengthy historical analysis, his evidence for a lack of coercive control in the past does not appear convincing, as he utilises the historical accounts of commentators who are likely to have easily missed a broader pattern of control and coercion that may have existed in addition to physical violence. Indeed, many feminist activists involved in running the first women's shelters appear to have missed this very context. Moreover, his contention that in contexts where women's "speech, dress, relationships, and behavior in civil society are controlled [by society]," violence alone should be the prevalent form of abuse is equally suspect. The primary reason for this is that dividing societies by how much freedom they give to women is an exercise likely to mislead more than it can illuminate. Class, region, and the very particular

circumstances and personalities seen in different households and communities may lead to very different levels of societal constriction on women, even within the same region, nation, city, town, or village. A woman residing in a village with strongly held and pervasive notions promoting women's deference and obedience to husbands, for example, may not feel beholden to these restrictions because her husband and parents-in-law do not especially adhere to these norms, and therefore do not especially enforce them. This woman's lack of strict adherence to social norms may not, however, mark her as irreputable, because the fact that she is married, and does not conflict with her husband, may still mark her as respectable. Furthermore, given differing histories, climates, religions, and social organisation, different societies and regions of the world are likely to restrict women in different ways. One society may fare worse than another in terms of women's educational attainment, but may display a better environment for women in terms of portrayals of female characters in popular songs and stories, for instance. To categorise a community as worse or better for women than another is no clear-cut exercise.[6]

My initial skepticism regarding Stark's notions about 'immigrant and religious communities' led to my interest in investigating whether his contentions would be confirmed by data from the Tibetan plateau. The second article of the five included within this thesis therefore interrogates Stark's contentions, utilising data from the Tibetan context to do so. This article is an important contribution to the literature because the validity of the theory of coercive control has not, to my

[6] We might reiterate the point by stating that to make pronouncements delineating some societies as 'better' for women than others is to oversimplify a deeply complex phenomenon. For example, the World Economic Forum utilises educational attainment, a health and survival index, and indices of political empowerment to rank nations on a scale of gender equality (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2010), while feminist economists have focused on household divisions of labour, the distribution of material goods within households, income, skills, and inheritance (B. Agarwal, 1997; Kabeer, 1994; Sullivan, 2004). Meanwhile, feminist scholars have looked into beauty practices, rates of anorexia, acceptance of rape myths, inter-personal dynamics, and media portrayals of women to understand levels or types of gender inequality (Aranda & Jones, 2010; Baum, 2004; Cornwall, 2012; Lonsway, Cortina, & Magley, 2008; Malson, 1999; McRobbie, 2004; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004).

knowledge, been investigated or questioned with data from outside the United States. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, theoretical conceptualisations of DV within non-Western settings are virtually non-existent within the literature. Article 2 therefore attempts to lay some of the groundwork for such a conceptualisation.

The Question of Gender Symmetry in Perpetration

Studies finding "women and men report similar rates of violence victimization, perpetration, and control over a partner" have resulted in criticisms of feminist theories which argue DV is a problem of violence against women (Anderson, 2009, p. 1453). Surveys revealing gender symmetry in perpetration, however, are quantitative measures of individual acts of violence, and therefore do not address the contexts in which violence occurs (Dobash & Dobash, 2008; Gilchrist & Kebbell, 2004; Olson & Lloyd, 2005). If we analyse the context of violence, there is evidence to consider DV as primarily male-perpetrated. While women sometimes do slap, shove, kick, or punch their male partners, accounts of female-perpetrated violence reveal the physical, emotional, and psychological consequences of DV are more severe for women than for men (Dobash & Dobash, 2008; Freeman, 2008; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2010). Men are most often the primary perpetrators in relationships in which both partners have used physical violence, according to several surveys (Dobash & Dobash, 2008; Swan & Snow, 2002). Women have also been found to use violence in self-defence or in anger at prolonged abuse (Cascardi & Vivian, 1995). Historical precedent also indicates DV is primarily male-perpetrated. For example, British law "at one time not only permitted a husband corporally to chastise his wife, but expected him to do so." Corporal punishment of wives in Britain was legal until 1978, while marital rape was only outlawed in 1991 (Freeman, 2008, p. xvi).

Within the academic literature, data coming from shelter populations or from women who have availed of other types of DV services tend to reveal one picture of abuse, while large quantitative surveys sometimes reveal another. Allen refers to the first type as studies "of women accessing shelters, hospitals, police and other helping services." These show DV to be primarily maleperpetrated against women (2011, p. 250). This data is likely to reflect relatively severe cases, as victims who access services tend to require escape and support from significantly abusive partners. Michael Johnson argues the large-scale quantitative data, looking at the general population, and studies which look at women who access institutional services, are each capturing information on different forms of DV (1995, 2006, 2008). As a result, he develops a typology of different types of abuse to explain the divergent findings, a practice Stark engages in as well. The quantitative data, argues Johnson, captures a type of intimate partner violence that is only rarely found among women accessing shelters and other institutional supports, but is more commonly found in the general population. He calls this form of violence 'situational couple violence', and argues it is not controlling in nature. It may also constitute violent acts of lesser severity than that found in coercive control, as it "would not in most cases call for...emergency room visits" (M. P. Johnson, 2006, p. 1005). This type of violence, says Johnson, is likely to be committed by both women and men. Both Stark and Johnson believe coercive control (Johnson has used both the terms 'intimate terrorism' and 'coercive controlling violence' to describe this phenomenon) is characterised by tactics of control, in which partners use emotional and other forms of abuse to force, coerce, or otherwise control and manipulate the actions and available choices and freedom of their partners. When coercive control includes violence, it may also be much more severe in nature. For both Johnson and Stark, coercive control is overwhelmingly male-perpetrated (M. P. Johnson, 2006; Stark, 2007).

A possible explanation for the male-perpetrated nature of coercive control in heterosexual relationships lies in the hypothesis that even when women attempt to enact coercive control, it is likely to be less successful than the coercive control enacted by men, because women's controlling behaviour tends not to be perceived as threatening. Moreover, "cultural beliefs influence behaviour…such that a woman might…use control tactics with less confidence than a man" (Anderson, 2009, p. 1449).

Family Abuse in Extended Family Living Arrangements

As we shall see in the subsequent pages, in extended family households, abuse of a daughter-inlaw by her mother-in-law or other in-laws is commonly seen in the study region.[7] Kandiyoti suggests this type of abuse is the result of a particular form of patriarchy, one that subordinates young brides when they marry patrilocally but allows women more power as they age. This type of patriarchy, argues Kandiyoti, exists in particular regions of the world, including South and East Asia, and is prototypically marked by the patrilocal extended family in which older men lead their households and women's labour is subsumed within a joint household production unit (1988, 2005). She argues this form of patriarchy gives rise to remarkably similar implications for women in a variety of cultural settings:

> The patrilineage totally appropriates both women's labor and progeny and renders their work and contribution to production invisible. Women's life cycle in the patriarchally extended family is such that the deprivation and hardship she experiences as a young bride is eventually superseded by the control and authority she will have over her own

[7] Emotional, economic, or physical abuse by in-laws is a phenomenon that has also been found in South Asia and Jordan (Clark et al., 2010; Rew et al., 2013).

> subservient daughter-in-law. The cyclical nature of women's power in the household and their anticipation of inheriting the authority of senior women encourages a thorough internalization of this form of patriarchy by the women themselves. (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 279)

Rew et al. argue that in India, the birth of a girl is seen as the birth of a child who does not truly belong to her natal household, as she will eventually marry into her husband's household. As a result, girls do not feel as if they entirely belong to their families, and this isolation is exacerbated when a woman marries, because she is originally a stranger in her husband's household and must adapt to the norms and practices of her husband and in-laws (Rew, Gangoli, & Gill, 2013). Moreover, newly married brides are expected to obey their parents-in-law and do not have a high status. Their power is enhanced considerably, however, upon the birth of sons, and especially when they are a bit elderly and become senior women of their households. As sons provide a woman with a stark improvement in the status, power, and esteem she enjoys, mothers become attached to their sons and a strong emotional bond results. Once a son is married, however, mothers are in a position to reap the benefits of the sacrifice and poor treatment they endured earlier in their life cycles, by controlling and being dominant over daughters-in-law (Kandiyoti, 1988; Rew et al., 2013). As several scholars argue, a daughter-inlaw's entry into the household causes not only jealousy on the part of the mother, as she must now share her son with another woman, but also threatens the mother's welfare in old age, as a daughter-in-law may respond to the household pressures she faces by convincing her husband to set up a nuclear family residence, away from parents-in-law. It is argued this causes mothers to belittle, ridicule, and sometimes even beat daughters-in-law, so as to prevent daughters-in-law from becoming confident or feeling a sense of belonging in their husband's household. Mothers

in this context also prevent the young married couple from getting much time alone, so that a strong romantic attachment cannot form between husband and wife (Rew et al., 2013; Vera-Sanso, 1999). As Kandiyoti points out, "Under a different regime, where the position of motherin-law is emptied of the matriarchal power conferred upon it by a particular form of domestic arrangement, young brides may welcome cohabitation with older women as a source of help with child care and household maintenance" (2005, p. 144). Sadly, however, such a regime is not always reported by scholars of the Indian context, and conflict between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law remains common. Vera-Sanso, however, argues growing economic independence of the younger generation in low-income communities of Chennai has led sons and their wives to verbally, emotionally, and sometimes even physically abuse mothers-in-law, with the mother-in-law's material needs dismissed and inadequately cared for (1999).

To an extent, Rew et al.'s descriptions of abuse perpetrated by mothers-in-law upon daughters-in-law echo the liberty restrictions described by Stark in his book on coercive control, as mothers-in-law's tactics can include "threats to send the woman in question back to her natal household," "exerting control over [a daughter-in-law's] clothes and appearance," or "preventing [daughters-in-law] from exercising their reproductive rights" (Rew et al., 2013, pp. 149–150). Abuse perpetrated by mothers-in-law can therefore take the form of myriad restrictions on a daughter-in-law's daily comportment and behaviour. This dynamic shows strong similarities to the study region, as we shall see.

DV Terminology

The term 'domestic violence' is not without controversy, and as a result, some scholars prefer to use 'intimate partner violence' (IPV) or Stark's 'coercive control'. DV as a term poses a number

of problems. For one, 'domestic violence' may appear to trivialise a serious social problem, confining it to the 'domestic' sphere, as opposed to the 'public' sphere, thereby counteracting the feminist notion that 'the private is political' or that the state and legal institutions have a responsibility to intervene in DV cases. Secondly, as 'domestic' suggests the entire family, DV as a term should include child abuse or other forms of abuse between family members, but it is conventionally used to indicate abuse between intimate partners alone. Moreover, 'domestic' is a term suggesting a family home in which individuals live together, while it is also a term that may indicate official family ties of marriage. However, DV is found among partners who do not live together, as well as among those who are unmarried but cohabiting. In addition, immediate postseparation or post-divorce periods can be a time of much danger, as ex-partners often continue to intimidate and attack survivors after the relationship has dissolved. Yet 'domestic' implies that the intimate partner relationship between victim and abuser is ongoing (Mullender, 1996). As Stark and others have described, 'violence' is also inaccurate, because physical violence is not the only occurrence in DV, nor is it even the primary or most important aspect of abusive relationships. Emotional and economic abuse, and restriction of everyday freedoms, are significant facets of abuse; to ignore these would be to seriously misunderstand abuse dynamics (Mullender, 1996; Stark, 2007).

In this thesis, however, I continue to use the terms 'domestic violence' (DV), while simultaneously using 'intimate partner violence' (IPV) as a synonym of DV. 'Coercive control' is a term I use to indicate the particular framing proposed by Stark. I use the term DV primarily because of its popular currency. It is a term that is readily understood as encompassing violence and abuse between intimate partners both among academics who do not focus on researching this issue and among those residing outside of academia. I hope my work will have a wide reach,

and will be readily understood by academics in various disciplines, by policy makers, and the general public. As a result, I have relied primarily on this term.

In addition, I use DV as well as 'domestic abuse' and 'family abuse' in this thesis because the breadth of the term 'domestic' or 'family' can include abuse by mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, or sisters-in-law, in extended family household situations. As noted above, I do not include child abuse or elder abuse in my conceptualisation; I focus instead on abuse of a household's daughterin-law. This was the type of abuse I most frequently came across in my interviews. I found the term 'domestic' useful in that the conventional use of DV allowed me to maintain attention on victimisation of a wife/daughter-in-law, while at the same time the breadth and ambiguity of the word 'domestic' allowed me to expand my analysis to household perpetrators who are not only husbands.

'Victim' is another term I use frequently within this thesis, one that is, once again, not without controversy. Many argue 'survivor' is more empowering to women, portraying women as more active and agentive. As Kelly, Burton, and Regan note, "the concept of 'survival', and its associated noun 'survivor' was developed within the women's and self-help movements to shift the stigmatizing meanings which attached to 'victim'" (1996, p. 90). However, a strict dichotomy between 'victim' and 'survivor', with the former understood as passive or helpless and the latter as more empowered, is a highly inaccurate conception of victimisation. As Kelly et al. state, "necessary defenses are developed at the time of abuse...[and] where abuse is occurring [these defenses] are extremely effective...coping strategies connected directly to individual survival" (1996, p. 93). Stark further describes victims and perpetrators as reacting to each other in a constant interplay, in which victims resist the controls placed upon them, attempting to maintain

spheres of freedom and autonomy for themselves, while perpetrators repeatedly work to quash these spheres. That is, Stark's theory asserts an "affirmative femininity that victims vigorously defend against illegitimate authority" (2007, p. 215). In other words, to equate victimhood with passivity is highly inaccurate.

In this thesis, I use the term 'victim' and 'survivor' interchangeably, while relying most often on the term 'victim'. Although I recognise that 'survivor' is a term bearing more connotations of active agency, I believe a victim/survivor dichotomy is inaccurate, and I intend to associate the term 'victim' with a more positive connotation. I also use the term 'victim' for clarity, as 'survivor' may imply that an individual is no longer within an abusive situation. For many of the women I interviewed, this was not the case. 'Victim' more clearly covers both those individuals still remaining in abusive situations as well as those with only past experience of abuse.

Part 3: Context of Gender Relations in the Study Region

In this section, readers are introduced to various aspects of gender relations in the study region, to provide background and context to the thesis articles. Of course, much variation in norms and practices exists, and no individual or household will be identical in beliefs and customs to another, whether in the study region or elsewhere. In this section, however, I intend to outline widespread points of commonality as revealed in the data I collected. The circumstances described below should thus be understood as common or prevalent trends, rather than attitudes or practices that are universal in the region.

Silencing Pressures on Women

Women are often under silencing pressures, as feminine speech is sometimes portrayed as deriving from thinking that is unwise, irrational, or vindictive. Common derogatory statements, as described by interviewees of the current study, include 'women will say all sorts of things,' or 'the words of dogs and women.' The association of dogs, donkeys, or livestock with women is in fact somewhat common, especially in proverbs. The proverbs 'women and dogs are not to be trusted' (ཁྱི་ར་བྱ་མོ་ནོ་མ་གཏོང་།) and 'donkeys and women cannot be happy' (བོང་ཡུ་བྱ་མོ་སྐྱིད་མི་འགྱོག) are two examples. Other common statements aimed at silencing women include a proverb referring negatively to women who speak before their husbands do so (ཕོ་ཁ་ན་བཀའ་ཐོང་མོ་ཁ་བཀའ). A particularly well-known and widely cited proverb states that 'women have long hair and small minds' (སྐྲ་རིང་མ་ར་ནོ་ཐུང་མ།).

Silencing pressures on women are underpinned by stereotypes around women's emotions and capacity for reason, stereotypes which are themselves reinforced by legends describing the ancestry of the Tibetan race. Thus, despite positive descriptions of women as compassionate, gentle, diligent, hard-working, and paying attention to detail, study participants also described women as over-sensitive, emotional, and over-critical of others or of their husbands. In particular, men are commonly considered to be not easily offended and not over-sensitive, whereas women are considered to be the opposite (DethongWangmo[བདེ་སྟོང་དབང་མོ], 2011; འཆི་མེད།[Chime], 2012).

Tibetan women are said to have inherited the traits of their ancestral mother, named Trak Sinmo, and men to have inherited the traits of the ancestral father of Tibetans, Shyangchub Semhua (ཕྱུར་མ།[Droma], 2008). According to one Tibetan author, the ancestral father of Tibetans is said to "have all virtues such as religious belief, respect, compassion, wisdom, diligence, and tolerance." The ancestral mother of Tibetans, on the other hand, is said to "have little religious belief, and [to be] disrespectful, not compassionate, not wise, not diligent, and intolerant." She is also said to "have a lot of lust, anger, arrogance and jealousy" (ཕྱུར་མ།[Droma], 2008, p. 56). Women are deemed to be especially prone to the fault of jealousy (ཚེ་རིང་ཕྱུར་མ།[TseringDroma], n.d.; འཆི་མེད།[Chime], 2012). According to one study informant, the Buddhist concept of the five human poisons, namely lust, rage, ignorance, jealousy, and arrogance, are considered to be found more commonly in women than in men (རྒྱ་ཡེ་བཀྲ་སྦྱོ།[GyayeTrabo], n.d.).

Women are also considered to have a tendency for criticising others unnecessarily, thereby causing conflict. A number of proverbs, for example, refer to evil or 'black' women as the

source of interpersonal conflict.[8] One such proverb reads 'the *abra* [a small rodent] that ruins the soil, the black woman that ruins the village' (ས་བཤིག་པའི་ཨ་བྲ། སྡེ་བཤིག་པའི་ནག་མོ།) (ཀོན་ནན་རྫོང་གོང་སྐད་ཡིག་ཁྲོན་རྩོམ་ཁང་།[GuinanCountyTibetanLanguageCommittee], 2011, p. 59). As stated by one interviewee, "Women like to evaluate each other…One difference between women and men is that women evaluate others…and so each day there are more and more faults [which they find in others]. Then they say more and more and in the end there are arguments" (woman local government leader, urban resident, age 37).

A tendency towards unnecessary gossip is also considered to be a common fault of women (DethongWangmo[བདེ་སྟོང་དབང་མོ།], 2011). An interview with an editor of the popular *Drangchar* Tibetan language magazine, for example, reveals the editor's view that a good Tibetan woman "should not have the faults of women, like gossiping and other common faults" (མགོན་དོ་སྐྱིད། [GonboKyi], 2010, p. 86). Women's supposed proclivity for gossip is sometimes expressly linked to norms of feminine silence. As stated by one interviewee of the current study, "In general, it's not good to talk. It's good to be quiet and do your work. Otherwise, if you go around talking too much, you'll get a bad reputation. If you repeat whatever you've heard, there

[8] One proverb reads 'the black woman who has brought disputes; the *tzomo*, primary among livestock' (ནག་རྩོད་གྱོང་ཀྱི་ སྐྱ་འདེན། མངའ་མོ་ཕྱུགས་ཀྱི་རྩ་མ།) (ཀོན་ནན་རྫོང་གོང་སྐད་ཡིག་ཁྲོན་རྩོམ་ཁང་།[GuinanCountyTibetanLanguageCommittee], 2011, p. 69). The *tzomo*, or a cross-breed between a yak and a cow, is primary among a herd of livestock, because it provides milk and gives birth to offspring. Similarly, this proverb is saying that an evil woman is the primary cause of conflict. Other versions of this proverb make identical points while using somewhat different wording. Another version of this proverb reads as follows: 'the black woman who ruins the village, the axe that chops down the tree' (སྡེ་བཤིག་ མགན་ཀྱི་ནག་མོ། ཤིང་གཅོད་ཁྲིད་ཀྱི་ཤུ་རེ།) (ཀོན་ནན་རྫོང་གོང་སྐད་ཡིག་ཁྲོན་རྩོམ་ཁང་།[GuinanCountyTibetanLanguageCommittee], 2011, p. 89). The reasoning behind this proverb, according to one informant, is that if you need to chop down a tree, you need an axe. Similarly, according to this informant's explanation of the above proverb, if the village is going to be ruined, you need a woman, since women speak too much and cause conflict.

will also be those people who call you a liar. So I also don't talk a lot" (woman, nomad, age 47). According to another interviewee, "For a new bride…if you talk then people will speak [badly] about you…When others ask you questions, you should answer. [But] if you don't repeat whatever you see and hear, then people will like you" (woman, nomad, age 48). Refraining from gossip, which is seen to require silence, and also by implication little socialisation, is thus considered to be the ideal behaviour of a good woman.

When women are generally considered to be prone to jealousy, unreasonable thinking, small-minded gossiping, and to have a tendency to cause conflict, women's words and opinions become all the more likely to be dismissed and derided. These negative stereotypes can also feed notions that women are likely to be at fault in the event of conflict. Thus, according to some accounts, wives tend to bear the brunt of blame for divorce and failed marriages (Kleisath, 2007), while some study participants complained that women are criticised even when the criticisms in question should be directed at their husbands or in-laws. Women are thus likely to face particular pressures to maintain harmony in their families, as disharmony can bring disproportionate burdens of stigma or a poor reputation.

General modesty of comportment is also stressed for women and girls. Thus, girls in some areas are taught to act less aggressive or wild in their play and to maintain a more modest and contained code of behaviour than boys (Kleisath, 2007). One interviewee in fact referred to the very body language of men, meaning the way men sit and carry themselves, as being more relaxed and free than women's.

Social pressures on women to refrain from strong and vocal opinions and to be silent, modest, and obedient impact women's confidence and behaviour in a number of ways. 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). Study participants likewise spoke of a social environment which suppresses women's confidence, and of the condescending manner in which women are viewed if they voice their opinions when men are deciding about a family matter.

Ceremonial and Ritual Practices

Scholars of Tibet have noted that a certain androcentrism and sexism pervades many Buddhist texts, as evidenced in religious literature and stories depicting women as brimming with uncontrolled, wild, and dangerous sexuality, or Tibetan medical theories asserting the inferiority of the female body (Gyatso, 2003). Makley finds it is commonly believed that men have the ability "to transcend bodily limitations and to succeed in pursuits of the mind," a result of men's karmic benefits from previous lives, while women are considered "more hampered than male bodies by physiological processes and thus suited to household labor" (2003, p. 601).

My fieldwork revealed, furthermore, that silencing pressures on women are reinforced by religious and folk rituals marking roles of deference and humility for women (Adams et al., 2005; Bassini, 2007; McGranahan, 2010; མགོན་པོ་སྐྱིད།[GonboKyi], 2010; འཇམ་དབྱངས་སྐྱིད།[JamyangKyi], 2008).[9] For example, women are often excluded from participation in rituals or from sites of religious

[9] Ritual life in the study region can include, for example, ritual offerings to local mountain deities, the *Leru* summer festival, ritual chanting by *Ngakpa* men or *Ngakma* women, and spirit possession.

worship. Much variation in practices can be seen throughout the study region, however, such that some villages exclude women from particular rituals whereas other villages do not. Despite this variation, as a statement of general summary, it is fair to say that men are dominant in ritual life.[10]

Women's participation in a number of rituals has, however, been increasing in some areas.[11] In one village I visited, for example, *Ngakma* female ritual practitioners undertook lengthy and frequent religious practice. While some of the village women were prohibited by husbands from joining this group of practitioners, those women who did take part enjoyed a publicly acknowledged reason to reduce the amount of time they spent on household labour as well as legitimate grounds upon which to obtain more collaboration from family members in completing household tasks. Participation in such religious associations also allows women to build strong connections outside the home, and is likely to raise the esteem women enjoy within their communities.

The chanting sites of male *Ngakpa* ritual practitioners are often sites which are off limits to women, while the temples of protector deities as well as entire monasteries, during monks' yearly period of summer retreat, are locations in which women's entry is often not allowed. These prohibitions are not universally followed in every location, but are common prohibitions. With the advent of tourism and the influx of Han Chinese and other ethnic groups to Tibetan-

[10] One rationale for women's exclusion from particular ceremonies is that a number of ceremonies developed around warfare and therefore formed in such a way that they became men's affairs. Thus, I was told the *Latse* ritual was once a ritual enacted by men before heading out for war, while most mountain deities are warrior deities associated with men, and therefore rituals associated with these deities have been conducted by men. [11]

[11] According to one Tibetan professor, women's participation in the *Latse* ceremony of propitiation to mountain deities has been increasing in recent years. Scholars have also told me that the phenomenon of female *Ngakma* ritual practitioners has been increasing. Spirit possession by women in Amdo is also a new phenomenon (Collins, 2011).

majority areas, monasteries in some more urbanised locations do not follow nearly as stringent prohibitions against women's entry during the period of summer retreat as they had done only fifteen years ago (C. E. Makley, 2002)[12] The stringency of women's exclusion from some maledominated religious spaces has therefore been decreasing.

According to study informants, other practices marking a ritually inferior status for women have been waning as well. Practices that are now confined to the past in some areas include household women eating by themselves in a separate space only after others have eaten, women standing up as a sign of respect whenever a man passes them on the road, women refraining from sitting alongside men on elevated platforms, obeying men's words at all times and refraining from speaking before men speak, and women removing their head scarf to show respect and humility before entering or walking about their village.

A number of practices, however, remain in force and adherence to these practices continues. Thus, women are commonly stated to be associated with pollution in Tibetan tradition (Adams et al., 2005; Bassini, 2007; McGranahan, 2010). As explained by Adams et al., pollution is "a form of spiritual contamination…[that] can be associated with death [and] the blood of menstruation and childbirth." Exposure to pollution "can weaken one's physical strength, health, and mental

[12] When I asked monk scholars and religious experts about the rationale behind these prohibitions on women's entry to religious sites, I was often told there is no need for these prohibitions to focus on excluding women specifically or that the individuals enforcing these prohibitions are mistaken. I was told that in the case of certain deities, women are not allowed into these deities' temples because the deities in question are jealous beings. If they see a woman, they will become attracted to her and will start behaving erratically. According to one explanation, the temples of protector deities are off limits to those without proper religious belief or the necessary ritual empowerments. Those without proper religious belief are monks from areas external to the monastery in question and women. As for prohibitions on women's entry to monasteries during monks' period of summer retreat, I was told the retreat period is a time when monks need to remain especially focused on religious practice. However, I was told that lay men's entry to monasteries at this time can be distracting for monks as well. Thus, it still remains unclear why women in particular, rather than both lay men and women, should be barred.

clarity" (2005, p. 828). Such notions of pollution give rise to prohibitions against women's touch, presence, or clothing in a number of arenas. Thus, men are believed to house protective personal deities upon their shoulders and upper body. If women's trousers or the bottoms of their robes are placed above men's heads, it is believed that a man's personal deities will abandon him. Similarly, in some areas, women's lower body garments must not be hung to dry in places where men might need to walk underneath. One interviewee spoke of the importance of women washing their husbands' clothing before their own, out of a sense of respect. As reported by an informant, in one part of the study region, women are not to warm their hands above the stove in their house, as this would be disrespectful to the god of the hearth. Additionally, in the case of horse-racing and archery, the traditions of some parts of the study region stipulate that women are not allowed to touch horses or the bows and arrows used in competition, as women's touch is deemed to bring bad luck to competitors.

Moreover, in some of the study sites, if a woman's husband dies at a young age, the widow is considered to be a harbinger of misfortune. Once her husband dies, she will have difficulty getting remarried, as men will be afraid they will suffer calamity or death if they marry her. In one case, the relative of a woman I interviewed was a young widow. This widow began working in a hair salon following her husband's death. The salon then lost customers, as customers did not want their hair washed by a widow. According to other accounts, villagers avoid social interaction with widows, leaving women to become social outcastes once their husbands have died (མགོན་པོ་སྐྱིད།[GonboKyi], 2010; འཇམ་དབྱངས་སྐྱིད།[JamyangKyi], 2008).

It is not the case that all Tibetan ritual and religious rites reveal restrictions or prohibitions on women, however. Praise for women, positive portrayals of female deities and spirit companions,

vows taken by religious practitioners to refrain from denigrating women, and specific rituals of propitiation to deities in which only women take part are all found within Tibetan tradition. The popular legend of Gesar, moreover, valorises masculine war and violence, but also includes strong female characters (M. C. Goldstein, Jiao, & Lhundup, 2008), while folk songs commonly express emulation and adoration for one's mother. Many examples of strong, powerful, or agentive women are found in Tibetan history and folklore, including renowned female religious practitioners and teachers (Allione, 2000; Diemberger, 2007, 2011; Karmay, 1998; Kemmerer, 2011; Schneider, 2010; Van Schaik, 2011; རྒྱལ་བའི་དགྲ་བཅོམ།[GyayeTrabo], n.d.).

However, ideas about women as polluted or harbingers of misfortune, combined with prohibitions on women's entry to or participation in male-dominated ritual spaces, serves to bolster norms by which women are meant to be modest, deferential, and relatively sidelined. When major ceremonies marking the ritual life of communities are primarily undertaken by men, the importance of men to their communities remains strong, while ideas by which women are considered of lesser value are reinforced. Hostile attitudes towards women may also derive from the association of women with misfortune and pollution. The trend of women's increasing participation in certain rituals, reduced adherence to ritual practices marking women's deference to men, and increasingly lax enforcement of rules barring women's entrance to certain religious sites, however, is partially reducing the normativity of women's exclusion.

Sinicisation and Marriageability

As is the case in China generally (D. S. Davis, 2014), marriage appears near universal in the Tibetan communities of the study sites. Getting married at a relatively young age, and staying married, are considered necessary attributes of the 'normal' and 'respectable' individual, with

social pressures pushing those who are unhappy in their marriages to stay within them. Although divorce often brings shame, divorce is by no means nonexistent in this region. Remarriage is generally considered necessary following a divorce, to maintain an image of normalcy and respectability. For rural Tibetans, economic considerations can also push women and men into a swift remarriage, as the conventional separation of farming and nomadic labour into men's and women's spheres means that working-age individuals of both sexes are usually needed in the household for subsistence and economic production. Moreover, woman-headed households are sometimes viewed unfavourably[13], a point that is emphasised by the proverb 'when a woman heads a household, it is inauspicious' (ཁྱིམ་བདག་ནག་མོས་བརྒྱང་ན་བཀྲ་མི་ཤེས།). Maintaining a state of single adulthood, then, is the condition that is most stigmatised. As a result, in the event that divorce is imminent, individuals appear to worry about how they can organise a second marriage for themselves, as refraining from remarrying would be considered relatively unacceptable.

This context of strong social pressures in favour of marriage can reinforce beliefs that women should refrain from outspokenness and assertiveness. As described by a university professor, when her female students vocally assert their opinions, they are sometimes ridiculed by male classmates, told that such behaviour will make them unattractive to boys and unable to get married. Female confidence, it seems, upsets conventions that women should be younger, more subservient, and less successful than their husbands.[14] One woman likewise described female students speaking openly about their opinions on gender inequality in their female-only dorm rooms, but

[13] According to one informant, a woman-headed household rises in esteem once the sons of this household grow older and take over leadership of the household themselves.

[14] This professor explained that "women think their husbands should be better than them in studies, courage, ideas, power and everything." The proverb 'buy the horse that is superior to you and get a wife that is inferior to you' (རྟ་འདོ་བ་རང་གྱི་ཡན། ཞོས། ཁྱིམ་ཆུང་མ་རང་གི་དམན། ཚོལ།) encapsulates this entrenched belief.

said, “In the classroom, we think our image is most important, and we are unable to say [these things] in front of boys, thinking the boys won’t want us” (urban resident, age 20). It seems, then, that revealing skills of outspokenness and eloquence, or asserting opinions that may make women equal to their husbands, can put young women in danger of losing desirability as a marriage partner.

A shift appears under way in the study region, such that more stringent restrictions on women's sexual purity have been forming, a process that may have been instigated by increasing interaction with Han society. This shift can affect the characteristics considered to mark individuals as 'good women' and desirable marriage partners. Indeed, urbanisation brings with it ever larger concentrations of Han and other populations in formerly Tibetan-majority areas (Fischer, 2008a). It is thus not surprising that cultural interactions have created shifts in practices and values.

Makley argues that, prior to Communist rule, Tibetan women in the Labrang area were more mobile and more sexually promiscuous than their Han and Hui counterparts. Tibetan women could engage in what was called ‘temporary marriages’ without derision, states Makley, as long as they maintained certain codes of discretion. Under Communist rule, however, Tibetans feel a deep sense of unease at rapid social changes occurring due to marketisation and urbanisation. Makley contends that more stringent social norms and constraints on women is how Tibetan communities of Labrang have been reacting to these forces. Maintaining a respectable image for the ethnic group, she argues, has taken on a new urgency in current times (2002).[15] Indeed,

[15] Yeh argues that in central Tibet, the Communist Party recruited poor Tibetan women into the state apparatus in the 1950s, taking advantage of women's gendered low status in Tibetan society to entice women away from their position in household- and village-based hierarchies (Yeh, 2013). However, I do not find this argument convincing, as the evidence Yeh reveals does not appear to indicate that the state considered Tibetan women to be more oppressed, on the basis of their gender, than the Han or other ethnic groups in this period.

Yuval-Davis has argued that women are often expected to represent their culture, and are "constructed as the symbolic bearers of the collectivity's identity and honour, both personally and collectively" (1997, p. 45). As Yuval-Davis further argues, while tradition is often cited to justify control and restriction of women, this control and restriction can intensify when "collectivities feel threatened" (1997, p. 46).

My own data likewise reveals that norms of chastity for Tibetan women may be shifting such that women may be under increasing pressure to maintain sexual purity if they are to uphold a good reputation. One woman's family, for example, worked to hide the fact that she had given birth out of wedlock, so as to increase the woman's chances of getting married and to reduce the likelihood that the woman's future in-laws would mistreat her. According to several of the current study's informants, it has grown more difficult for women who have given birth prior to marriage to find a marriage partner; the importance of a woman's chastity, if she is to be deemed marriageable, is a stronger norm among urban residents and farmers than among nomads ("Video interview with Kunsang Dolma," 2014), though this dichotomy is not without a number of exceptions; and the importance of monogamy within marriage also tends to be more important for farmers and urban residents than for nomads. Given that Tibetans often consider nomads to be the more traditional and quintessentially 'Tibetan' group of Tibetans, while farmers are often considered to be more Sinicised, a result of the often closer proximity of farming villages to urban areas and to areas where Han are concentrated, we might tentatively conclude that strong norms of chastity for women may have been adopted from Han society.

In those nomadic areas where norms around women's chastity are not particularly stringent, women may more easily liaise with a number of sexual partners before marriage. In addition,

difficulties of divorce and remarriage are likely somewhat reduced for women who are still young and therefore seen as not 'too old' for remarriage, for childless women who do not need to worry about the fate of their children post-divorce[16], and for women who come from well-respected or rich families, since members of these types of families are often seen as desirable marriage partners.

It may be worth noting at this point that young women living or staying alone in this region may be harassed late at night by male colleagues and acquaintances, who attempt to enter or to be allowed to enter the woman's living quarters. While this is not universally felt by women to be threatening, it is at least at times felt to cause fear. One woman I interviewed told me about how she used a knife to protect herself, threatening one such male intruder with violence were he not to leave her abode immediately. The implications of this practice, which I call 'night visits', for women in the study region are discussed further in Article 3 (*The Impact of Household Form and Marital Residence on the Economic Dimensions of Women's Vulnerability to Domestic Violence*).[17,18]

[16] It is extremely common for individuals from the study region to cite concerns about children's welfare when they speak about their own reluctance to divorce partners or about the advice they give to others against divorce.

[17] That women are always sexually available to men may be a prevalent notion in the region, as a popular category of oral folk stories revolve around a trickster named Uncle Donba. As stated by a Tibetan translator of several Uncle Donba tales, "you will not find a Tibetan who does not grin luminously when you simply mention the name [Uncle] Tompa" (Rinjing, 1997, p. 9). However, Uncle Donba commonly rapes unsuspecting women in these tales, either through brute force or sinister deceit. Humour is indeed generated by the narration of these stories, in which rape and victimisation of women are portrayed as entirely unproblematic and simply amusing.

For clarity, however, let us note that it is certainly not the case that prevalent Tibetan social and cultural discourses universally denigrate women. This point is discussed further in the sub-section above entitled 'Ceremonial and Ritual Practices'.

[18] This practice of visiting and propositioning women in their homes at nights, which I call 'night visits' and discuss further in Article 3, is referred to as 'night hunting' in one study of Bhutan, where this practice also exists (Chuki, 2014).

Economic Modernisation

A strong age-related hierarchy is found in the study sites, such that elders have higher status than the younger generation, and men have higher status than women. Sharma, writing about north India in the 1980s, similarly found young people are expected to defer to elders, while women are expected to defer to men. "Where these relations of authority correspond to relations of [economic] dependence this deference is easily exacted," she states, "but discrepancies do arise, as we should expect in a period of rapid economic change" (U. Sharma, 1993, p. 342). The study region, similarly, has been undergoing much economic change in recent years and decades. It is to a description of gender roles and relations within this context that we now turn.

China has seen rapid changes to social and economic life since the 1980s, bringing significant shifts to women's social, political, and economic position (Kaufman, 2005; Tang & Lai, 2008; Tsui, 2001; Lu Zhang, 2009). Women have enjoyed greater possibilities for education and income, while low birth rates under family planning policies may have resulted in increased household investment in girls (H. Zhang, 2007). In the study region, many Tibetan women are working full time or engaged in business, particularly in urban areas, and it appears there is no stigma around women's work outside the home. Tibetan women have also been promoted to high political positions, though few in number (Barnett, 2005).

At the same time, recent decades in China have seen notions of natural feminine and masculine difference emphasised (Hanser, 2005; Rofel, 1999), while the sexualisation and commodification of Chinese women's bodies, both in the Chinese workplace and elsewhere, has also been on the rise (Hanser, 2005). As described by Guang and Kong "jobs ads with discriminatory gender requirements" are common, while "[g]ender bias in the labor market...manifests itself in the

disproportionately high layoff rate for female workers, the explicit stereotyping of women into certain occupations, and the generally lower wages women receive for the same positions" (2010, p. 244). In recent years, individuals have been discussing and complaining about these issues on social media (Chen, 2017; Z. Huang, 2016; Lin, 2016). Most recently, women's activism around sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and DV have caused a stir online and in the media in Beijing (See Appendix 5).

In the study region, economic development and urbanisation are creating profound, ongoing, and rapid changes to lifestyles. Recent decades have seen health care and education expenses increase. Schooling of children has also grown more important in a modernised and Sinicised economy in which language skills, literacy, and official diplomas have grown in necessity. Moreover, previous patterns of subsistence based on farming and animal husbandry have been supplanted by an economy that is more market-oriented, such that more of the necessities of life are bought with cash rather than made by hand. As families must pay for children's school fees, health care, and other expenses, cash income has grown more necessary for a family's welfare. A newly competitive environment is additionally emerging, in which households and individuals compete over the amount of income they earn vis-à-vis others.

In response, rural household members undertake seasonal labour for pay, dig for the lucrative medicinal herb known as caterpillar fungus, or rent out their land to fungus diggers, so as to increase household income. Importantly, women are leaving home to engage in seasonal labour for pay along with men. In some cases, it is women who are even more likely than men to leave home to earn this type of income. As one interviewee explained to me:

> Before even if men didn't earn a lot of money, there weren't a lot of expenses, and it was okay. Now you have to buy cars and motorcycles and electrical appliances, so you have to earn more money…Before, one item of clothing and one pair of shoes to wear in both winter and summer was fine, but not anymore. As economic conditions have improved, expenses have also increased, so both men and women have to go for seasonal labour. (woman, farmer, age 45).

In this new context, many women's familiarity with the world outside of their home villages is deeper than it once was, women are growing more aware of methods by which cash income can be earned, and more women are bringing cash income into their households, either through seasonal labour for pay or through professional work.

In a context in which pervasive notions of women's incompetence were expressed or described by interviewees and within Tibetan language publications, women's increased mobility and income-earning is significant because a lack of awareness of the outside world was listed as a reason why women's words should be dismissed. Moreover, women's fewer interactions with different types of people and traditional confinement to labour based in and around the home were listed as reasons why women are considered to lack competence in tasks such as facilitating negotiations between community members, professional work, and making household decisions.[19]

[19] When asked whether she ever disagreed with her husband's decisions, for example, one woman said, "I don't disagree with his ideas. I think he knows [what to do]. Compared to me, he is the one who has gone to different places a lot and knows about what's written in books. I don't know about those things, because I'm a woman. And I haven't gone to school and I just stay at home" (woman, urban resident, age 47).

Moreover, as urbanisation hurdles forward at a rapid pace, and as nomads are under pressure from policies aimed at moving them to permanent, sedentary settlements, it is not surprising that many families do not see their children's future on the farm or grasslands, and instead hope their children will succeed in the education system. In this context, girls are sent to school much more often than before, with parents now more likely to see value in sending daughters to school along with sons.[20] Education further increases women's awareness of the world outside their home villages, while also enhancing women's opportunities for professional careers.[21] These trends may lead to family members placing more value on women's abilities and opinions, or to greater decision-making power accruing to women in the home (See the sub-section on 'Household Decision-Making' below for more on this topic).

Along with economic modernisation, however, it appears tribal and village-based unity is, to an extent, on the decline. Informants of the current study described a general move away from community-based activities, strong community ties, and mutual aid and support within communities, and moves towards more individualistic lifestyles and priorities. According to these accounts, as villagers travel in and out of their home villages to engage in seasonal labour for pay, they are spending less time with one another and collaborating less than they did in the past; the fact that independently earned income makes one less reliant on fellow villagers for help and support has caused relationships between community members to grow more distant; and village politics and village elections have grown more contentious as government-provided salaries for village leaders have increased, and as lax regulations allow for corruption and

[20] This was a point conveyed to me by numerous interviewees, occupying a range of positions in society.

[21] I do not believe education or urbanisation are entirely positive trends in this region. In the long term, these trends may lead to more poverty, as the large numbers of children sent to school does not appear commensurate with the number of jobs available to graduates. Moreover, some social restrictions on women appear to increase with urbanisation, particularly with regards to women's sexuality and promiscuity.

motivations of personal gain to flourish.[22] Within this context, although Hillman and Henfry's findings show Tibetan men feel spending time with other men is more important than spending time with their families (2006), one of the current study's participants argued the opposite. According to this participant, as human relations have grown more distant, men are spending less time with male friends and, as a result, are valuing their wives more. The implication is that men are more reliant on wives for emotional connection and friendship than they once were. The increasing atomisation of life in the study region, then, may be causing more intimacy or mutual reliance between married couples.

Household Decision-Making

As noted earlier, according to study informants, the prototypical or ideal scenario is one in which household elders are treated with the most deference, obedience, care, and respect, followed in status by young men, then by young women. Parents, therefore, are said to beat, scold, lecture, or instruct the younger generation, parents' or elders' instructions and decisions are meant to be obeyed, and children are meant to refrain from talking back to parents. While both men and women are meant to obey the elder generation, women are meant to act in an obedient and respectful manner towards husbands as well. In return, husbands and parents-in-law are meant to treat wives with care and concern.

Men's high status within the home can be seen in son preference and the fact that men and elders tend to be served food first and to sit on higher platforms than women. If wives talked back to their husbands, this was viewed negatively by several study participants. One participant even

[22] In addition, new forms of entertainment, provided by television and convenient travel to urban areas, has caused children and youth to spend less of their free time with each other or within the confines of their villages.

spoke of the condescension women face if they talk back to their husbands, including talking back when beaten. Often, therefore, women are under particular pressure to refrain from anger, even when criticised.

The prototypical role of men is also to be the head of their households. In community-wide gatherings, for example, men sometimes cast ballots or make decisions on behalf of their families (Gayley, 2013). Several interviewees likewise noted that men are more central in decision-making when a decision is important enough that it requires men of the extended family, clan, or village to come together to discuss the matter at hand. These types of more important decisions include deciding upon ways to resolve conflicts between families or villages or how to divide communal land. Calculating household expenditures, selling animals and other household products, and earning sufficient income for the family are also typically considered to fall within the sphere of men's work, with men commonly listed by interviewees as the ones to hold, manage, and decide upon how to spend the household finances.

However, while men's control of finances is prototypical, in practice many couples discuss and decide together how they spend their money or have joint access to household income. Some also spoke of discussing decisions with parents or parents-in-law. The elder generation sometimes managed decisions and finances until they reached a certain age, at which point it was felt they were too old to continue with these tasks, and the younger generation then took over.

In the sphere of non-monetary household decisions, such as deciding where to send the children to school, searching for suitable marriage prospects for children, and decisions around whether or not to move the family's residence from a rural to more urban area, many study participants spoke of discussing plans with their partners, thereby revealing similarities to financial decision-

making. It was still apparent, however, that in the event of a disagreement, men can often override wives in deciding how money is to be spent.

With regards to asserting one's opinions and influencing family decisions, within the household older women with children are often in a better position to acceptably assert themselves than are younger patrilocal brides. Newly married brides are meant to display a comportment of particular modesty and silence, as emphasised by the proverb, ‘The bride who speaks too early and the one-year-old dog that barks too early’ (མནའ་མ་གྱགས་མ་སྨ། ཁྱི་དང་ཟླག་མ་སྨ།). As described by one study participant, once a woman has given birth to children, however, and in particular once her children are no longer very young, her power grows, since her children care for her and side with her within the family. “There aren’t people who tell the mother to be quiet when she talks about a family matter,” this participant explained, a point to which he added by citing the saying ‘a mother of three sons must be a little severe’ (བུ་གསུམ་ཨ་མ་ཆུང་ཙམ་བཙན་པོ་ཞིག་ཡིན་དགོས།).

Part 4: Parallels to South Asia and Other World Regions

The norms and patterns described above, and those that are further depicted in the subsequent thesis articles, bear many similarities to the household structures and family roles often found in parts of South Asia. For example, we have seen in the section above that modesty and obedience are particularly emphasised for women in the study region. Similarly, describing north Indian households in the 1980s, Sharma notes that a new bride is "expected to behave in a modest and self-effacing manner and if she wishes to win her new [husband's] family's favour she will not risk her future happiness by asserting her wishes until she has established a firm footing in her new household" (1993, pp. 344–345). This pattern is similar to that found in Tibetan families, where women often have more freedom to act assertively after some time has passed in their marriage, and they have established their position in their husband's household. Moreover, in the north Indian context Sharma describes, there is an "ideology of seniority, of male competence, of the distinction between daughters and daughters-in-law" (1993, p. 347). Strong age-based hierarchies and ideologies of male competence are likewise common in Tibetan communities, as described above. Sharma's point that daughters-in-law are under pressure to be more subservient than daughters, moreover, is a point further borne out in the current study's data.[23]

The ways in which divorce is stigmatised in the study region also show similarities to some communities in South Asia. Thus Grover, reporting on practices among the urban poor in New Delhi, states that "[t]he stigma attached to being *akeli aurat* (a single or divorced woman) becomes a primary catalyst for remarrying." Moreover, "[t]he detrimental consequences of

[23] Theories of 'household bargaining power' discuss social constraints pressuring women against acting assertively, and describe how this phenomenon intertwines with other aspects of women's power and status in the home. Theories of household bargaining power are discussed and described in detail in Article 3.

remaining unmarried, single, divorced or widowed have been widely acknowledged in different South Asian settings" (2014, p. 816). As we have seen, in the study region as well, divorce is very commonly followed by remarriage, as this is often considered necessary to maintain respectability and social status. Philips describes similar social constraints when discussing Tamil plantation worker communities in Sri Lanka (2014).

Philips also explains that in the above-mentioned Tamil communities, elders tend to intervene when married couples conflict with each other, usually pressuring couples to reconcile and stay in their marriages (2014). This prevalence of intervention by community elders suggests strong family or community-level bonds, a pattern which is in fact shown in many parts of the world. Pleck, reporting on her historical research into DV responses in late 19th century Pennsylvania and Illinois, for example, states that "neighbors and relatives often 'meddled' in abusive families and believed they had the right to do so." "[T]he ideal of family privacy," in this setting, was effectively a fiction (Pleck, 1987, p. 12). Yount likewise reports that in one part of Egypt, women frequently rely on men in their natal families to negotiate with their husbands and inlaws, in the hope that this will reduce husbands' violence or aggression (2011). These patterns of intervention by elders and relatives is clearly seen in the study sites as well. In many parts of the world, it seems, couples and individuals belong to family units that do not hold to a strong sense of individual or couple privacy. In Article 2 (*Coercive Control, Community Embeddedness, and Family Systems*), I discuss how to integrate an awareness of the highly communal nature of Tibetan families into our understanding of DV, as such a theorisation is sorely missing in the literature.

Indeed, parallels between DV patterns in the study region and regions more distant than South Asia are clearly found, such that similar triggers for abuse or similar perceptions of violence are seen in South Africa (Kim & Motsei, 2002), Kenya (Odero et al., 2014), and Egypt (Yount & Li, 2009), to name just a few. This reminds us that DV is truly a global problem, one with local specificities that must be accounted for, but with similarities that may be found across widely divergent cultural regions as well.

Part 5: Political Context

In this section, I draw on both the available literature and the data I collected during fieldwork to give a general background on the study region's recent history and Tibetans' political situation.

Recent History

Various parts of the region are areas with a long history of banditry (Costello, 2008; Jabb, 2009), tribal or kin-based rivalries (Costello, 2008; Pirie, 2012), flexible alliances, and temporary and uncertain realms of power (Nietupski, 2011; Pirie, 2007) in pre-Communist times. Also prior to Communist rule (generally described by residents as beginning in 1958), the Nationalist-allied warlord Ma Bufang established his dominance over much of the territory of Qinghai. Beginning his rule in 1931, Ma implemented a campaign of apparent ethnic cleansing of Tibetans and forced conversion of Tibetans to Islam. Many Tibetan villages were forced off of fertile land and into higher, often less fertile land (Fischer, 2008b). Ethnic tensions between Hui (that is, Chinese Muslims) and Tibetans continue to this day, at times devolving into communal violence.

The early years of Communist rule saw state campaigns of land reform, anti-feudalism, and socialist education. Tibetan guerrilla resistance to these campaigns led to deaths and large-scale imprisonment of men in labour camps[24]. Tibetan residents of the monastery town of Labrang, for example, cite 1958 as a pivotal year marking the start of hostilities:

[24] See, for example, the following works: "An Introduction to The Joys and Sorrows of a Boy from Naktsang (Naktsang Shilu Kyiduk)," n.d., "Nagtsang Boy ' s Joys and Sorrows , or How China liberated the Tibetan grasslands," 2011; ICT (International Campaign for Tibet), 2009; Li, 2011; C. Makley, 2005; O'Neill, 2011; Shakya, 1999

> By the fall of 1958, most Tibetan guerrillas had been captured or killed and almost twothirds of the 3,500 resident monks were imprisoned or in labor camps. The rest were returned to lay life, the monastery was closed, worship was forbidden, and rural regions were reorganized into communes. (C. Makley, 2005, p. 49)

We might, then, understand this period as a time of wholesale destruction of the social and institutional structures Tibetans were accustomed to and as a time of violent resistance to these changes. Likewise, Chinese historian Li Jianglin analyses various Chinese government secret and public sources to conclude hundreds of thousands of individuals throughout Tibetan areas were killed and arrested during this period, accounting for close to 20% of the total population of Tibetan regions (J. Li, 2011; O'Neill, 2011). While the staggering numbers Li raises are not believed by all, historian Tsering Shakya also documents fighting and revolt in the late 1950s in eastern Tibetan areas, including in one location the bombing of a monastery, hundreds of deaths, and thousands of refugees (Shakya, 1999).

The Cultural Revolution, starting in the mid-1960s, was characterised once again by wholesale attacks on traditional culture, including monastic institutions, religious expression, traditional rituals, and even Tibetan language. Figures of authority and those deemed reactionaries were attacked, humiliated, and tortured in public struggle sessions. Revolutionary factions vied with each other for power. Buildings, libraries, books, and objects of art were destroyed by mobs. This was a period of palpable fear and witch hunts, in which murder could go unpunished as long as it was carried out in the name of revolution by the 'right' individuals (M. C. Goldstein et al., 2008; Norbu, 2010; Shakya, 1999, 2000; Spence, 1999). Indeed, older interviewees of the

current study described periods in which villagers had no choice but to flee or surrender, when the vast majority of village men were killed or imprisoned, when starvation was rampant, or when frequent struggle sessions wreaked havoc on families and communities.

The Reform era, beginning roughly in the late 1970s, was characterised by a repudiation of the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, initial transitions towards a market economy, a decline in nationwide poverty rates, and a dismantling of various aspects of state-supported welfare programmes (Brandt & Rawsky, 2008; Croll, 1999; Whyte, 2010). The steady growth of space within which to reassert Tibetan culture and religious identity is found within this period (Schiaffini, 2007; Shakya, 1999), though continued restrictions on the type of expression allowed in published literature remained (Shakya, 2000). Moves towards privatisation of agriculture and industry and growing corruption are found in this period (Spence, 1999).

The current era, which we might take to be the early or mid-1990s onwards, is marked by the retrenchment of state-owned enterprises, rural to urban migration, a rise in informal sector employment, rapid urbanisation, increasing commercialisation and market competition, and in recent years new government schemes to ensure citizens' welfare (Brandt & Rawsky, 2008; *From Poor Areas to Poor People: China's Evolving Poverty Reduction Agenda*, 2009; Spence, 1999; Whyte, 2010). According to many Tibetan accounts, wealth and material circumstances have improved exponentially for most households over the past several decades (Costello, 2008; Fischer, 2009).

State Policies

Nomad Resettlement and Communal Conflict

Despite the improvements in wealth noted above, nomads in Qinghai are currently under a policy of settlement into permanent residence in towns and settlement camps, signalling what appears to be the rapid eradication of Tibetan nomadic life.[25] While policies of moving nomads into permanent homes and away from lifestyles on pasture lands are quite varied in terms of how they are implemented within particular townships or counties, reports suggest that in some areas resettled nomads face great poverty and material deprivation (ICT (International Campaign for Tibet), 2010c; "Undercover in Tibet (documentary)," 2008). Due to the loss of land on which livestock can graze, settlement policies can force nomads to sell off their herds, often nomads' primary source of wealth (ICT (International Campaign for Tibet), 2010c). Settled nomads may turn to theft and prostitution amid the poverty resulting from settlement policies. Other problems may include inadequate provision of infrastructure for settled life, such as hospitals, schools, stores, and public transportation; hunger; alcoholism; and joblessness ("Undercover in Tibet (documentary)," 2008). One informant of the current study spoke of theft and violence within a resettlement site, because nomads from different villages, who do not feel a sense of solidarity with each other, were settled in one location together.

Prior to the current nomad resettlement policies, various nomadic regions saw communal land demarcated with fences such that each family's land allocation was specified and officially delineated. Scholars of Tibet as well as informants of the current study argue that the government's fencing of grasslands has caused degradation of the pastures which nomads rely upon for their livelihood, while also increasing conflict within villages (Pirie, 2005; Yeh, 2003).

[25] See the following works for more information: "16,000 nomadic households in Qinghai 'settled,'" 2009, "Chinese government forcibly relocates Tibetan nomads," 2009, "Tibetan nomads, farmers may be losers in China's ecology protection plan," 2009

Yeh further argues that communal violence, usually between different Tibetan tribes or villages, has increased since the founding of the PRC, due to particular government policies related to the drawing of county and prefecture boundaries (2003).

Thus, conflict and violence between villages or tribes over rights to the use of land, or over raiding and theft, have been common in this region, both historically and currently, with intertribal or inter-village conflict and violence extending well into the 1990s and 2000s (Pirie, 2012; Yeh, 2003).[26] It is perhaps not surprising, then, that study informants referred to macho attitudes centred on men's prowess in warfare[27] [28], and to beliefs that households require the presence of many men for their physical protection[29]. In a setting where theft and communal fighting may be common, and where grassland fencing policies may have caused inter-familial conflict to be on the rise, households and communities feel they need to rely on men to protect their interests. Mediation and negotiation to resolve conflict is a male-dominant affair, while men sometimes take on the role of fighters to protect the interests of their families and communities (Pirie, 2005; Yeh, 2003). This context likely reinforces men's high status within

[26] While conflict and violence outside the home remain common in the study region, it is possible we are witnessing an overall trend that is ultimately moving in the direction of suppression of communal hostilities. There are several reasons supporting such a hypothesis. First, historical spheres of competing political power and ruling authority, such as that held by major monastic centres, tribal confederacies, and local kings and chiefs prior to Communist rule are no longer possible in a state in which Communist rule is strong and overarching. Second, residents of major urban centres need not fight over land and water usage rights, because their urban residence exempts them from a livelihood founded in land-based subsistence. Moreover, the study area is continuously urbanising. Third, there is some evidence, though admittedly anecdotal, of cases in which governmental authority has suppressed communal violence.

[27] One proverb, for example, states 'if you can't be a bandit, you are not a man' (ཇག་ལ་འགྲོ་མི་ཐུབ་ན་སྐྱེ་ཤ་རུ་མ་རེད།).

[28] A couple of interviewees additionally spoke of the courage and valour to enter war as the preserve of men alone.

[29] The latter was listed to me by two informants who come from farming communities as a requirement of the past, rather than the present.

the home. Indeed, some study informants voiced the belief that when households are composed of many men, they are strong, prestigious, or well-protected (Ford, 2014).

Ethnic Minority Policy and Discourse

State discourses tend to portray minority ethnic groups as backwards and inferior to the majority Han. Hoddie, for example, argues that the official Chinese media often depicts minorities "as primitives afflicted by pathologies such as poverty, illiteracy, and superstition," stating further that "minorities are most often characterized in terms that place them on a lower rung on the ladder of civilization relative to the Han majority" (2006, p. 4). Yi likewise describes school textbooks as erasing minority history, and placing minorities in a hierarchy of social evolution, with the Han at the top (2005). Fei Xiaotong, considered one of the foremost Chinese sociologists, "delineate[d] a process through which all ethnic group cultures move toward a unified national culture" (Postiglione, Zhiyong, & Jiao, 2004, p. 197). Within this "unified national culture and identity," moreover, "[t]he Han are said to be the nucleus" (Yi, 2005, p. 42).

Schein argues that depictions of minority ethnic groups in China overwhelmingly portray young women colourfully clothed in ethnic attire, and surrounded by natural surroundings of flora or fauna. States Schein, "This was part of a recurrent constellation of features that merged femaleness with rural backwardness with relative youth (in the sense of lack of seniority) with non-Han culture." These features, moreover, "were unambiguous in their hierarchical ordering of Chinese society" (Schein, 1997, p. 74). While such depictions are common for ethnic minorities in general, according to Hillman and Henfry, depictions of Tibetans and Mongols counteract this trend, as these display images of masculine warriors who are virile, brave and pure (2006). This does not mean that feminised depictions of Tibetans as innocent, sensual, and

submissive are entirely absent (Erhard, 2007; Schiaffini, 2007). Rather, it is simply to note that "Mongols and Tibetans...were more frequently masculinised" (Hillman & Henfry, 2006, p. 254).

Whether masculinised or feminised, however, Tibetans remain depicted as more primitive or backward than the Han. Not only do school curricula portray minority cultures as "fragmented and tokenized," symbolised by exotic food or colourful dress (Yi, 2005, p. 43), state and scholarly discourses also portray the Communist Party and Han society as the civilisers of minorities (Barabantseva, 2009; Postiglione et al., 2004). In Tibetan areas, this sense of paternalism towards minority ethnic groups combines with an ingrained sense of state suspicion of Tibetans, seen as liable to become Tibetan nationalists or disloyal to the Chinese state. As Yi's study shows, state education policies "devalued Tibetan culture and language" through a process of "focusing on integration and equipping students to become part of the Han-dominated mainstream." This minority education policy, moreover, "is shaped by a fear that ethnic and religious allegiances may undermine the capacity of minority people to be loyal political and cultural citizens of the Chinese nation-state" (2005, p. 41). Devaluing of Tibetan religion, language, and culture, therefore, is in part an attempt to Sinicise Tibetans, in order to secure their loyalty to Communist Party rule.

The various districts of the study region each house particular local variants of education policy, with some areas offering schooling in Tibetan language, primarily or partially. However, fears that education in the Tibetan language shall be eroded or is undergoing a slow erosion by state directive has fuelled many of the protests in the region (Tenzin, Dorjee, & Finney, 2014). Moreover, many feel they are doomed to remain marginalised and underprivileged in the wider economy if educated in the Tibetan medium. As a result, parents are left to make a very difficult

choice, between preserving Tibetan language in the younger generation or losing this vital aspect of Tibetan culture for the sake of job opportunities.

Scholars find that policies around economic development, like education, tend also to marginalise Tibetans. While policies of developing western regions of China and alleviating poverty were implemented in the mid-1990s, for example, Barabantseva finds that "the government is driven more by economic incentives, along with a determination to consolidate its political and military grip over the region" than by an interest in fostering local forms of economy and culture (2009, pp. 246–247). The infrastructure, industry, and large-scale construction projects initiated at this time has, according to Barabantseva, "increasingly consist[ed] of migrant workers from the East at the expense of local employment" (2009, p. 235). Moreover, state subsidies to urban areas favoured state-owned enterprises and those with connections to government-dominated networks. As Fischer explains, "the dominance of Han Chinese in the state-centred networks of wealth and power meant that the opportunities generated...largely advantaged workers and entrepreneurs with Chinese fluency, Chinese work culture, and connections to government or business networks in China" (2009, p. 7). Subsidy-led economic policies have, moreover, led to strong dependence on the central government, leaving "patterns of local capital accumulation" undervalued (Fischer, 2009, p. 6).

Political Protest

Political protests, including large-scale expressions of dissent, have occurred in Tibetan areas throughout Communist rule. Such protests have reflected many Tibetans' disaffection with particular political events or with the state's ethnic minority discourses and policies overall. We have seen, for example, that nomad resettlement and grassland fencing policies have

disadvantaged Tibetans in a number of ways, as has marginalisation of Tibetan culture and language in education and the economy. Indeed, an important cause of hostility towards the state lies in the erosion of Tibetan language ability and a perceived lack of state support for Tibetan language education (ICT (International Campaign for Tibet), 2010a).

Religious restrictions also appear to lead to resentment. For example, in 2001, a popular Buddhist Academy in Sichuan attracting thousands of Buddhist followers saw government destruction of nuns' and monks' living quarters in a bid to restrict the Academy's size (L. Wang, 2009). In 2016, once again this huge centre of religious learning has been placed under a demolition order, so as to drastically reduce the number of individuals studying Buddhism at this site (*China issues demolition order on world's largest religious town in Tibet*, 2016). Additional restrictions placed upon Tibetan religious activity include arrest or intimidation of those who attend religious teachings by the Dalai Lama in India; restrictions around the number of monks and nuns allowed to study and live in particular monasteries, or restrictions around where monastery residents can be from; and mandatory attendance for monks and nuns at 'patriotic reeducation' meetings (Dorjee, Dorjee, & Gerin, 2016; ICT (International Campaign for Tibet), 2009, 2010b; Rinchen, 2011; TCHRD, 2017; Upendran, 2013; E. Wong, 2010). A particular point of sensitivity derives from the fact that historical and political factors have caused many high religious leaders to escape into exile, cutting Tibetans off from their religious teachers, as movements across the border to India are restricted and controlled. According to a U.S. State Department report:

> Although authorities permitted some traditional religious ceremonies and practices, including public manifestations of religious belief, they confined many religious activities

> to officially designated places of worship, often restricted or canceled religious festivals, at times forbade monks from traveling to villages to conduct religious ceremonies, and maintained tight control over the activities of religious leaders and religious gatherings of laypeople... Chinese authorities prohibited a June horse race in Gansu Province because participants in the race were required to save the life of at least one animal and dedicate the act to the Dalai Lama's long life. (U.S. Department of State, 2016)

In addition to religious restrictions, a common complaint is that Tibetans face racism and a second-class status within the PRC, seen for example in Tibetans' restricted opportunities relative to the Han to be issued with jobs in government offices outside of their home areas, greater difficulties for Tibetans to obtain government-issued passports to travel abroad, and greater likelihood of government surveillance and arrest of Tibetans, even when they are engaging in the same activities as Han individuals. Since the Tibetan protests of 2008, denial of hotel rooms to Tibetans in major Chinese cities has also been reported (ICT (International Campaign for Tibet), 2010b). Moreover, ongoing disappearances and unexpected detentions of Tibetans, particularly during and after the protests of 2008, as well as torture, beating, and even death of individuals held in custody are commonly reported (*Like Gold that Fears No Fire: New writing from Tibet*, 2009; Shakya, 2009).

Given this context, it may not be surprising that political protest is rife in the study area. Opposition to the government is so strong that over 140 self-immolations, apparently in protest at Chinese rule, destruction of Tibetan culture, or government policies, have occurred in Tibetan areas since March of 2011. A majority of these immolations have been concentrated in eastern regions of the Tibetan plateau, including the study region, and self-immolations peaked in late

2012 and early 2013, when fieldwork was ongoing (*"Acts of significant evil" The criminalization of Tibetan self-immolations*, 2014, *Self-immolations by Tibetans*, 2014). Harsh governmental repression following protests and self-immolations of Tibetans is, moreover, noted in many accounts (*"Acts of significant evil" The criminalization of Tibetan self-immolations*, 2014).

Public discourses tend to portray Tibetans' protests as the product of external and Western manipulation, or position Tibetans as spoiled and ungrateful, full of unnecessary complaints despite monetary subsidies and concessions to minorities. According to state discourse, "[g]iven that the region had been experiencing ample development and rising prosperity, local Tibetans had no valid cause for grievance" (Fischer, 2009, p. 3). When poverty is portrayed as the only possible or officially acknowledged problem in Tibetan areas, however, the realities giving rise to Tibetan protests become ignored, such as religious restrictions, official barriers to Tibetans' attempts to preserve their language and culture, frequent surveillance and arrest of Tibetans, and restrictions against free speech.

Part 6: Legal Environment

In 2015, following years of lobbying by women's groups (de Silva de Alwis & Klugman, 2015), China's State Council passed the country's first law specifically on DV. This section discusses the legal and institutional environment of DV response in China, including this new legislation and its implications for Tibetan women. We first look into the broader international legal environment, marked by United Nations treaties, followed by a more specific exploration of Chinese laws around marriage and DV.

Violence Against Women and International Law

International treaties and conventions are often believed to push states towards creating a better environment for human rights and gender equality (Shelton, 2000; True, 2016). The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), for example, defines the content of discrimination against women and articulates an agenda for state-level action to prevent and end such discrimination. The convention defines gender-based violence as "including physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty." It also makes clear that states "are responsible for inaction in preventing gender-based violence and discriminatory practices" (de Silva de Alwis & Klugman, 2015, p. 10). CEDAW was adopted and ratified by China in 1980. Other relevant international documents include the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, and the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights and endorsed by the General Assembly in 1994. The

position of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women was created as a result of the latter (de Silva de Alwis & Klugman, 2015).

UN mechanisms aimed at pushing states to comply with their international commitments can encourage both maintenance and improvement of relevant national-level laws and policies. The CEDAW committee, for example, requests reports from governments on their compliance with the treaty, and receives NGO testimony alongside those of governments, so that it can make accurate recommendations with regards to further initiatives which the state in question should undertake (True, 2016).

According to Lu Zhang, the 1995 UN World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, acted as a catalyst to the formation of Chinese women's groups. As Zhang explains:

> [T]he Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women...brought Chinese activists into an unprecedented level of contact with international women's movements, nourished an explosive growth of women's NGOs, and also broke the silence surrounding the issue of violence against women (VAW), including domestic violence…Chinese activists engaged in a "learning process" that has led to their redefining and addressing domestic violence as both an issue of gender inequality and a human rights violation (Lu Zhang, 2009, pp. 227–228).

International law, international treaties, and the very act of holding UN conferences and meetings, then, can influence both civil society activism and state responses to violence against women. Moreover, the conceptions of gender-based violence found in UN documents not only

provide a normative framework and standard, but also tend to be reflected in the definitions adopted within the legal codes of many states (de Silva de Alwis & Klugman, 2015).

However, states can and do choose at times to refrain from complying with international norms, despite their own ratification of relevant treaties (Shelton, 2000). Nor do states necessarily implement CEDAW committee recommendations or make changes in accord with the committee's observations. While China was an early ratifier of CEDAW, it did not implement a DV law until thirty-five years later (de Silva de Alwis & Klugman, 2015). While DV was first mentioned in the country's Marriage Law in 2001, moreover, this does not appear to have created much impact on divorce proceedings at the time. As de Silva de Alwis and Klugman state, "it was not until 2013 that the US citizen Kim Lee made legal history in China when she was granted a divorce from her Chinese national husband on the grounds of domestic violence" (2015, p. 24). Although it is not entirely clear if Lee's case was the first ever divorce granted on the grounds of DV or not, the fact that her case has been hailed as making legal history (Osnos, 2013) suggests that divorce granted on grounds of DV is at least rare.

The passage of DV legislation marks a significant moment in Chinese history. As the law was drafted and passed after my fieldwork ended in 2013, I have not been able to investigate the law's impact on Tibetan communities. However, I must side with one Chinese women's rights activist who states "I think [the law is] just empty words on a piece of paper right now" (Wenqi, Lok-to, & Mudie, 2017). That is, for Tibetan women in the study sites as well, I suspect the new law currently makes very little difference.

Let us first look into the state of institutional responses to DV prior to the most recent legislation, then to the provisions found within the law's text, and finally to an exploration of how this legislation may affect Tibetan communities.

Legal and Institutional Responses Prior to the New DV Law

The PRC first implemented a new Marriage Law in 1950, the text of which constituted a radical break with previous practice. Men and women were granted equal freedom to make marriage decisions. Forced and arranged marriages were outlawed, children were forbidden from marrying, and marriage was stipulated as existing only between a single man and woman, such that polygamy was henceforth prohibited (R. Agarwal, 2002; D. S. Davis, 2014).

In 2001, for the first time, a revision to the Marriage Law "explicitly mentioned domestic violence...as grounds for divorce and for compensation" (Hester, 2005, p. 450). However, as noted above, very few divorces have been granted by courts on the basis of DV alone, and court officials are often deeply reluctant to officially acknowledge DV evidence (Beach, 2013; Lee, 2014; Lim, 2013; Lijia Zhang, 2013). Thus, compensation on DV grounds is unlikely to be provided.

Official bodies have often emphasised the welfare of society rather than the individual victim (Tsui, 2001). The state-promoted concept of social harmony may reinforce this situation, by placing “the sanctity of the family and marriage over individual rights” (Lu Zhang, 2009, p. 233). He Xin argues that divorce was difficult to obtain until the 1990s, as "the priority of the courts was to achieve a reconciliation between [couples]," a goal the courts worked towards by "frequently insist[ing] on pre-trial mediation in divorce cases" (He, 2017, p. 5). Indeed, the

original 1950 Marriage Law asserted that "all petitions for divorce be subject to mediation first by leaders of the local community and later by court officers" (D. S. Davis, 2014, p. 552). Since this early period, institutional responses have been focused on mediation and reconciliation of conflicting couples (Tsui, 2001). While the law stipulates a divorce must be granted if both spouses declare a breakdown of affection, in the event that only one spouse makes such a declaration, the court is only required to grant a divorce *after mediation has failed* (D. S. Davis, 2014). For many victims of DV, then, one or more rounds of mediation are likely to be required before a divorce can be obtained, making divorce in many cases neither quick nor easy.[30]

Interviewees of the current study described courts sending couples away, instructing them to reconcile, upon an individual's first occasion approaching a court for a divorce. A focus on reconciliation of couples was related by several of the policy actors I interviewed as well, such as Women's Federation officers, lawyers, and health workers. This thrust to reconcile couples can include blaming or scolding the victim or telling her to be more understanding and patient towards her husband (Rajan, Kiss, Devries, & Zimmerman, 2016). Indeed, scholars have noted victim-blaming attitudes towards DV survivors are common in China (Parish, Wang, Laumann, Pan, & Luo, 2004; Tang & Lai, 2008; Lu Zhang, 2009).

Recently, the case of Kim Lee, mentioned above, brought much attention to the issue of DV in China, while also revealing the incredible bureaucratic hurdles faced by survivors who attempt to

[30] Davis likewise reports that divorce is extremely easy to obtain in China if both husband and wife agree to the divorce, and if both parties have negotiated and concluded the arrangements for property division prior to approaching the courts. In the event that such agreement is not reached, however, the courts may send individuals away, by refusing to adjudicate when they are first approached by a couple disagreeing on these matters (2013).

protect themselves. Kim Lee is the American ex-wife of Chinese celebrity Li Yang, owner of the famed English language training programme Crazy English. As reported by the Economist:

> In 2006, when she was seven months pregnant, Kim Lee was kicked so hard in the abdomen by her husband that she needed hospital treatment…The few people Ms. Lee confided in, including her Chinese sister-in-law, told her to stop provoking her husband. When she complained to the police, after suffering concussion and bruised ribs, they told her to 'relax and go home.' ("An American victim lifts the lid on a social taboo," 2012; Rudolph, 2012)

In 2011, after her husband beat her head into the ground several times, Lee attempted to file an assault report at a local police office, but as Lee herself reports, "as far as the police were concerned, no crime had occurred" (2014). Lee then went home and posted a picture of her bruised face online, a post which went viral and caused a stir of discussion on the Chinese blogosphere. The police only acknowledged her husband's abuse after the popular uproar (Lee, 2014; G. Wong, 2012). Other cases show similar patterns of police indifference. According to China Daily, for example, Li Wei is a woman who called the police ten times over the course of nine months to report her husband's severe violence. As the newspaper reports, "At first, they would send a policeman to her home to find out what happened and make peace between the couple. Later…as they kept receiving her phone calls, the police recognized her voice and refused to help anymore. They said it was inconvenient for them to get involved in family disputes" (Xu, 2011).

As Kim Lee states, "[s]upport services [for DV survivors] are few and far between even in the largest cities, and there are no functioning shelters to speak of" (2014). Indeed, in 2014

Sinosphere reported that nine months after her divorce, Lee found her ex-husband standing in her living room. In the past, her husband had repeatedly threatened her over text message, calling her an 'American psycho' and telling her to 'watch her back'. Upon her divorce, Lee was granted the first-ever reported protection order in Beijing. However, the protection order expired after three months, and "despite multiple applications to the court, she has been unable to secure another" (Tatlow, 2014).

In the study region, community and family responses to DV are similar to the responses of official government bodies, in that they are aimed at reconciling the conflicting couple. Thus, village leaders and elder family members often urge couples to forgive each other and stay together. Community-level interventions are particularly salient in the Tibetan setting, where numerous interviewees informed me that Tibetans tend not to approach official authorities like the courts or the Women's Federation in the event of DV, preferring family-based strategies to deal with the problem.[31]

The New DV Law and Its Likely Impact on Tibetan Women

China's first law on DV, passed in 2015, has been hailed as a groundbreaking moment. While it excludes divorced and homosexual partnerships, it requires police to intervene immediately to reports of abuse, allows victims to seek a restraining order (also referred to as a 'protection order') in court, and stipulates judges only have 72 hours to make a ruling (AlJazeera, 2016;

[31] One interviewee, a nun, also told a secondhand story of a woman who wanted to leave her husband, as she could no longer bear the constant fighting occurring in her marriage. She therefore fled to the interviewee's nunnery and became a nun. Soon, her husband came looking for her, stated they had not obtained divorce papers, said his wife had not received permission to become a nun, and took his wife back home with him. The leadership of the nunnery did not prevent the husband from forcing his wife's return, suggesting monastic institutions may not provide an effective site of protection or escape.

Leggett, 2016; Reuters, 2015). It defines DV as "beating, harming, limiting a person's freedom, and frequent verbal abuse, intimidation, and other violating behaviours on a person's body or mind" occurring between family members (S. Chen(陈舒), Xiong, Yao, & Hou, 2016, p. 31). Unmarried, cohabiting partners are included in the law, while abuse of minors by their guardians is also incorporated (Chen(陈舒) et al., 2016; N. Zhang, 2016). Restraining orders can be used to stop the abuser from "harassing, stalking or contacting" the victim or her close relatives. Such orders can also be used to order the abuser to move out of the couple's home, "and other measures that ensure the personal safety of the applicant" (N. Zhang, 2016, pp. 8–9). The fact that abusers may be required to leave their home of residence has been described as "'a striking provision in a country where most homes are owned by the men'" (qtd. in True, 2016, p. 8). Indeed, this is an important measure in support of survivors' safety.

Passage of DV legislation, in a country where such legal provisions did not exist previously, is a positive step. As Leggett cautions, however, we must keep in mind that while "[s]uperficially, the law may seem to mark a distinctive watershed moment...historical experience [also] demonstrates incremental change, and sometimes enduring stability, of formal and informal institutions around domestic violence" (2016, p. 3). We have seen, for example, how the 2001 inclusion of DV in the Marriage Law did not appear to instigate a commensurate increase in courts granting divorce or compensation on grounds of abuse. According to several Beijing-based women's rights groups, in the year since the DV law was implemented, only 41 restraining orders were issued in Shanghai, despite over 5500 cases of reported DV (Wenqi et al., 2017). The fact that any orders were issued is a positive sign, suggesting the law may have catalysed the very process of incremental change Leggett refers to. In a country where corruption is rife (Gong, 2015; P. Wang, 2014) and where connections built on family and professional ties play a

major role in individuals' access to official permissions and paperwork (Bian & Ang, 1997; X. Huang, 2008; Munro, 2012), however, it is worth questioning who receives restraining orders, how, and why, as it is possible that only those women with the requisite connections are able to obtain an order. If this is the case, abusers could also use their connections to block and prevent the issuance of restraining orders. One woman I interviewed underwent severe abuse for many years, after which her husband decided he wanted to leave her and marry another woman. This interviewee believed the poor divorce settlement she received from the courts, in which she received no compensation and did not retain custody of her children, was in part the product of the fact that her husband had a friend working in the court. Her husband also had a relatively high position in a government work unit, and was therefore in a position to build and maintain connections. In such cases, 'guanxi', or networks of connections, may prevent victims from obtaining much needed support.

In another case, 'guanxi' led to the opposite effect, such that a victim's ties to high government officials ultimately protected her from her abusive partner. This woman, a participant of the current study, was beaten severely and left at times without enough money to feed her children. She took to frequently visiting her neighbour's home to borrow food. It was her connection with this neighbour and the neighbour's husband that eventually allowed her the requisite contacts with highly placed individuals, necessary for her successful divorce. Despite the law stipulating that a divorce should be granted if one party claims a breakdown of affection, in this interviewee's case, her husband's repeated refusal to grant her a divorce, despite her fears that he might kill or seriously injure her, proved a nearly insurmountable barrier, overcome only when very high officials intervened on her behalf. Moreover, these officials only intervened because they feared for the victim's life. As this interviewee stated:

> The civil affairs bureau had two heads and two directors. They brought [my husband] to their house and passed a judgement of divorce. He was not allowed to disagree. They needed to protect women and children. Protecting women and children is also in the law. [They told him], 'what should be done if one day you kill her? Who is going to take responsibility?...Go ahead and divorce. You beat her like that. What if something happens? We are also scared.' (woman, urbanised nomad, possibly late 50s)

In this case, then, the Marriage Law which was in force at the time did not protect the interviewee, as her only hope for divorce relied on high-level support from local government officials. This suggests that whatever laws are on the books are not necessarily what is implemented on the ground.

Relying on friends with powerful positions was not the only avenue of support this interviewee attempted to utilise. After years of abuse, she also visited the local Women's Federation. It is not surprising that, given institutional tendencies to press for reconciliation in China, Federation officers' efforts did not help her situation at all. As this interviewee stated, "The Women's Federation people told [my husband that] his wife had approached them and they said [some things to him] but he didn't care. It had no effect at all...[A]fterwards he scolded me. He said I had ruined his reputation, that I had even gone to the county Women's Federation, and he beat me just like before" (woman, urbanised nomad, possibly late 50s). As many DV service providers, in the UK and elsewhere, will attest, protecting victims' safety is paramount in service provision. It is often crucial that abusers do not find out the victim has approached service providers. Moreover, mediation and reconciliation with a severely abusive partner is unlikely to accomplish anything besides further danger and harm for the victim. Only interventions which

the abuser cannot ignore are likely to be effective in such situations. Such interventions can include restraining orders supported by full police enforcement, or the victim's escape to a shelter such that the shelter's location is secret and the abuser cannot initiate contact with the victim. Simply encouraging or lecturing the offender to stop his abuse, therefore, is likely to be ineffective. Yet such encouragement and lectures are often the primary tactic employed by Chinese official institutions when intervening in DV cases.

Let us then turn to the question of restraining orders, officially available to women on account of the 2016 DV law.[32] We have seen above that restraining orders may not be easily obtained in practice, as very few appear to have been issued in the year since the law's passing. In the event that a restraining order is issued, however, are police likely to enforce it? In my interviews with lawyers and police officers, I was informed that, in accord with the law, the police always visit a victim's house if they have received a call about DV and that perpetrators are arrested if beating has resulted in a certain level of injury. As we have seen above, however, the available evidence suggests the police and judiciary in China are reluctant to intervene in DV cases.[33] Indeed, in the case of one woman I interviewed, the woman suffered prolonged and severe abuse at the hands of her husband, but eventually divorced him. She was still beaten by her husband several times following her divorce, however, and on one of these post-divorce occasions she called the police. The police reinforced the notion that men have the right to hit their wives by telling the woman's

[32] The law was passed in December 2015, and went into effect in March 2016 (N. Zhang, 2016).

[33] Even when DV is officially acknowledged, sentences can be excessively mild. One woman's husband received only six and a half years of imprisonment for beating his wife to death, even though the victim had attempted to report the abuse to the local police eight times previously, with only dismissive responses from the authorities (Lee, 2014; Xu, 2011). When a woman from Hangzhou was thrown off her second-floor balcony by her husband, he received only six months in jail (Lijia Zhang, 2013).

ex-husband, "'She's not your wife now so why are you beating her? You don't have the right to beat her.'" Although they intervened in this post-divorce case, their reaction suggests they may be unwilling to intervene in cases of couples who are still married. Moreover, in a previous 2009 research project I conducted in the study region, local NGO workers spoke disparagingly of police lack of response in DV cases, stating the police would only come in severe situations or if given a bribe, or alternatively would do nothing at all (Rajan et al., 2016). If restraining orders are enforced, and if women are aware of this option and avail of it, then the new DV law may have an impact on Tibetan communities of the study region. Whether such orders are likely to be issued and enforced, and whether women are even aware of this option, are open questions.

Deeply ingrained institutional and cultural structures working against practical enforcement of women's legal rights are found elsewhere in China as well. In rural southwest China, Li finds that women seeking legal advice and advocacy for their divorce applications received gender-biased advice from 'legal workers', or individuals who have less training than lawyers but perform the functions of lawyers in rural areas where more highly trained professionals are difficult to find. Li finds that legal workers tend to stereotype women, believe they are less able to care for their children, and thus actively obstruct women's attempts to obtain child custody. As Li states:

> Behind legal workers' differential treatment of women...is the profoundly ingrained patrilineal tradition in rural China....[in which] children, and especially sons, should be raised by their biological fathers...Acutely aware of the importance of family lineage in the rural context, legal workers often align themselves with the patrilineal tradition in their divorce law practices. (K. Li, 2015, p. 164)

As a result, "while female disputants were frequently subjected to overt or covert obstruction from legal workers, male disputants rarely encountered similar impediments to their pursuit of child custody" (K. Li, 2015, p. 163). Such ingrained practices, based on beliefs unsupportive of women's legal rights, suggest the new DV law is unlikely to swiftly create change, nor is the law even necessarily likely to be implemented in practice.

Yet another point of salience in the DV law is its lack of provision for women's shelters. The text of the law states that "People's government [offices] at county or city district level may set up temporary shelters on their own or by relying on a relief agency, to provide temporary assistance to victims of domestic violence" ((新华社) Xinhua News Agency, 2015). Thus, local bodies are not required to provide shelters, though they may set up such services if they so choose. Moreover, funding for shelters, if these are to exist at all, must be found on an ad hoc basis at the local level. In several other countries, such as the UK, on the other hand, shelters are among the most important services available to victims, as they provide a residence for women and children fleeing from violent men who threaten their safety. Shelter locations are usually kept secret and their location information is often jealously guarded, so that perpetrators cannot find or continue to intimidate victims. In the study sites, many women can and do escape temporarily to their natal homes, and thus would not necessarily utilise shelters, were these to be provided. However, some women's parents or other close relatives have passed away, leaving these women with less straightforward access to a place of refuge via family channels. In one case, a woman interviewed in the current study lived far away from her natal family and was also estranged from them. In another case, a woman's abusive husband locked her out of their home in winter, in the middle of the night. In such cases, women may well avail of shelters if they are easily accessible, even if only to obtain a brief respite from beatings for a night or two.

An alternative to government provision might lie in non-profit, private provision of shelters, organised by grassroots groups relying on non-governmental funding. However, I do not believe this is likely to be organised in the near future in the study sites, for a number of reasons. Firstly, sustained local activist interest in addressing the needs of DV victims appears very rare or non-existent in this region. As Article 5 (*The Discourse of Tibetan Women's Empowerment Activists*) shows, my attempts to find activists committed to the cause of DV did not reveal many such individuals or groups. Secondly, state authorities often view grassroots organising among Tibetans as suspect and politically sensitive. Even when non-profit initiatives centre on poverty alleviation or apolitical intellectual exchange, foreign NGO funding in Tibetan areas is sometimes blocked, and gatherings or conferences are at times prohibited, deemed by the authorities to involve 'too many' participants. Thus, private non-profit initiatives, while undertaken by local groups to alleviate poverty or other social problems, tend to rest on shaky ground, as these initiatives may be shut down by the government at any time. If local groups firstly become committed to the cause of DV, and secondly find a way to sidestep political sensitivities so as to organise and receive the necessary funding, private shelters may be possible.

If created, shelters would indeed be a positive step, but as we have seen, many barriers to the construction of shelter-based services in the study region clearly exist. One further barrier links to the above-mentioned point about the pervasiveness of corruption and the importance of connections in China. I find it difficult to imagine that a shelter, particularly one set up with government funding, would maintain a truly secret location, such that well-connected abusers could not use backroom channels to discover the shelter's location and thus find and apprehend their escaping partners. If shelter locations are not kept secret, however, their capacity to keep women safe becomes much diminished.

Finally, while we have seen above the ways in which full implementation of the new DV law or adequate provision of services for survivors is likely to be hampered, it must additionally be noted that legal change may have a limited impact on Tibetan women because many choose not to approach official bodies in the event of DV. As a monk and community leader whom I interviewed said, "We Tibetans think going to court is putting the matter into Han Chinese hands...We think letting Han Chinese people decide is a serious problem...The people who [should] decide upon family matters [are] the older generation [in one's village]" (monk, possibly early 50s). Other policy actor interviewees, such as village leaders and Women's Federation officers, stated similarly that Tibetans prefer to rely on family channels for support. One Women's Federation leader in a Tibetan-majority area told me that only Han and Hui women approach her office with DV complaints. Relying on the authorities may become more likely, however, in the event of severe abuse, such as when a woman feels that her life is in danger.

While my view may seem pessimistic, it is based on the context and realities of the study region. In a setting where ingrained institutional cultures tend to work against DV victims' interests, and where enforcement of DV regulations may be lax, recent DV legislation may not have much of an impact. Furthermore, well-connected abusers may be able to block the issuance of restraining orders requested by their wives, while police and local government organs may not be eager to issue restraining orders in the first place. Institutional practices of mediation in the event of DV would not be ended under the new law, though such practices may be ineffective or may even cause harm, especially in severe cases.

The new law could make a significant and positive impact, however, if a host of measures are implemented. First, widespread publicisation of the law's provisions would be useful. Such publicity should be conducted not only in Chinese, but in the Tibetan language, through the Tibetan language television and radio stations. Training of police officers, Women's Federation

officers, lawyers, and others in the provisions of the new law and practical means by which to implement these would be useful.[34] At the local level, this should be accompanied by strong pressure from higher-level government offices and authorities, so that state officers feel they are truly required to implement the law.

Further, if we recall the woman interviewee described above who faced prolonged severe abuse, but could not divorce until high-level local government officials intervened, why did this woman need to wait so long before obtaining a divorce? If a husband is highly positioned and has good connections, can he prevent a victim from divorcing altogether? For adequate implementation of the law, state organs should investigate such issues and rectify problems that are found. Secondly, compensation in the event of DV, while provided for in the law, should be put into practice, as some women struggle with poverty and with little access to their children following divorce. The prospect of poverty also creates a barrier against leaving an abusive partner. As many Tibetan women may have never approached official bodies for support, evidence of DV should be collected through the testimonies of friends, relatives, and neighbours of the victim, rather than through Women's Federation or police records alone. Finally, women should have easy access to legal professionals who will advocate for their wishes and best interests, and these professionals should be trained in non-judgemental and gender-egalitarian advocacy of women's legal rights.

[34] Until 2014, the Anti-Domestic Violence Network of China, based in Beijing, conducted trainings of police officers and other officials. Trainings centred on the topic of women's rights and how officials should intervene in DV cases (Lu Zhang, 2009). The network shut down in 2014, due to new government regulations that restricted the network's capacity to obtain foreign funding, as well as regulations which effectively cut off the network's access to collaborative ties with official bodies such as Women's Federation offices and police departments (Dong, Luksich, & Xu, 2014).

Part 7: Research Methods and Approach

Data Collection

As noted earlier, fieldwork was undertaken over a fifteen-month period in 2012 and 2013. Indepth, unstructured interviews with seventy-six women and twenty-four men were conducted for this project, and interviewees were purposively sampled for a range of age and education levels, and for both rural and urban residence. Thus, young adult, middle-aged, and elderly interviewees; illiterate, literate, and highly educated individuals; as well as rural and urban residents were all interviewed so as to obtain a range of experience across factors of generation, education, and age. Significantly, dedicated services for DV victims are rare in this region, and those that do exist have limited coverage and are, for the most part, not accessed by Tibetans. I was therefore unable to identify interviewees through DV service providers, and I needed to sample individuals from the general population. As a result, I was unable to identify interviewees as victims or perpetrators prior to interview. Not all interviewees were DV victims or perpetrators, therefore. A significant minority, approximately 20% of interviewees, had personally experienced some amount of physical violence or abuse in their households, whether mild or severe. Many of the remaining interviewees, i.e. those without firsthand experience of violence or abuse, told secondhand stories of DV occurring to mothers, sisters, and close friends.

Prior to beginning this research project, I had spent many years living and working in the study region. As a result, I could rely on my advanced fluency in both the Amdo dialect of Tibetan and mandarin Chinese to interview respondents directly, without the help of a translator. I spoke to interviewees in Tibetan, or in Chinese if the interviewee was more comfortable speaking

Chinese.[35] All interviews were transcribed directly in their original language, so as to avoid the changes of meaning that can come with translation into English.

I was fortunate to receive several small fieldwork grants, which together paid for the research assistants and transcribers with whom I worked. I originally worked with one male and one female research assistant. In accord with the World Health Organization's (WHO) ethical guidelines for research on violence against women (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005), I held a five-day training session with the two assistants, to discuss and sensitise them to the gendered issues around DV and the ethical precautions necessary for this project. The male assistant then interviewed male respondents on his own, while the female respondent interviewed women respondents on her own. I interviewed primarily women, as well as a few men who were village leaders, police officers, or lawyers. The male assistant interviewed 15 men, the female assistant interviewed 25 women, while I myself interviewed 60 of the 100 individuals who were interviewed in total.

I chose to undertake numerous ethical precautions to protect women's safety. I felt these precautions were necessary because a victim who talks to a researcher about DV may be perceived by her perpetrator or other family and community members to be obtaining unwarranted support or unacceptably revealing internal matters to outsiders. DV incidence may increase as a result, and indeed investigators in other research projects have discovered post-hoc that an interviewee was beaten by her husband as a result of her conversation with a researcher. The WHO's guidelines on researching violence against women therefore stipulate that only one woman in each household should be interviewed, an interviewee's community of residence

[35] In the case of one interviewee, I conducted the interview in English.

should not be informed the survey is looking into violence, and researchers should refrain from researching men in the same groups from which female respondents are drawn (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005). In order to strengthen the precautions around women's safety, I chose to interview only three or fewer women residing in the same village or town, so as to prevent the wider community from talking about my interviews and eventually discovering that DV was the topic of discussion. This required me to travel quite a lot to interview different individuals, and I also kept a record of the residence and home village of interviewees so as to ensure the two assistants did not interview individuals from the same locations where I myself had conducted interviews. In addition, I chose to inform interviewees that I was researching couple conflict and abuse, but I was careful to refrain from mentioning DV or abuse when explaining my research to anyone besides interviewees or my two research assistants. I told others that the topic of research was women's social status and family life. I also made sure to interview individuals in isolation, away from any family members or friends. In line with the WHO ethical guidelines, in order to protect interviewee safety and confidentiality, the assistants and I were ready to change the topic of conversation in case a family member or other individual interrupted the private space of the interview.

I utilised 'narrative interviewing,' a method by which researchers aim to allow for the relatively free production of stories on respondents' own terms, allow respondents space to voice their opinions using their own vocabulary and conceptualisations, and encourage respondents to discuss the matters they feel to be most important (Elliott, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Riessman, 2002). Since the aim is to elicit respondents' spontaneously provided narratives, interruptions are kept to a minimum, participants are encouraged to respond via longer narratives rather than short statements, and questions do not focus too specifically on the interests of the

researcher. For example, seeking to understand fear of crime, one set of researchers found asking generally about fears allowed them to get closer to the meaning of fear of crime for respondents than more direct questions about crime (Elliott, 2005).

In line with narrative interviewing, the interviews were unstructured in form. My research assistants and I used a topic guide listing suggested interview questions and topics, but I did not restrict myself to asking all or even any of the questions listed in the guide, as the aim was to elicit interviewees' narratives and expressed priorities. However, it should be noted that, in practice, the research assistants' interviews were more semi-structured in nature, while my own tended to veer more towards an unstructured format.

During interviews, I noted interesting points raised by interviewees and returned to them when appropriate, and followed Ellsberg et al.'s recommendation of "giving the participant several opportunities to disclose her experience of violence within the course of the interview" (2001, p. 3), as this can enhance memory recall and interviewees' comfort with disclosing private information. I often used specific terms for 'hitting,' for clarity as well as to separate the action of hitting from the label of 'abuse.' In addition, I used terms for conflict and abuse which were colloquial and commonly used, and also used milder terms as opposed to terms with a stronger connotation, since the latter might have alarmed respondents.

Traditionally, Tibetans in the study region maintain their livelihood either by farming or by living in nomadic settlements and engaging in animal husbandry. Two periods of participant observation, one in a farming village and one in a nomadic settlement, were built into the research, in order to gain an understanding of gender divisions of labour within households and day-to-day household activities and relations. In addition to this, the fifteen months of fieldwork

included numerous shorter stays with Tibetan families in towns, villages, and nomadic settlements. An endless number of valuable conversations between myself and Tibetan friends and acquaintances, recorded in a fieldwork journal, have also informed my understanding of Tibetan women's social status, household gender roles, and DV in this region. Tibetan language articles and books on women's status or women's history have additionally informed my understanding and analysis of the data presented here.

Research Questions

The research questions which eventually underpinned this thesis were adapted from my original questions, in accord with the most salient and interesting themes emerging from the data. Each question relates, in order, to each article within this thesis:

(1) How ethical is feminist research and activism undertaken by a community outsider? How might outsiders' research and activist practice be ethical?
(2) To what extent does the Tibetan context reflect and accord with prominent DV theories? How might available theories be adapted to be more relevant to the Tibetan context?
(3) How does household marital form (patrilocal, matrilocal, and other forms of marriage) affect extended family relationships, domestic abuse, and women's vulnerability or risk of experiencing DV?
(4) How do local conceptions and definitions of abuse affect women's reactions to domestic abuse and violence, perpetrators' understanding of the situation, and broader community and family responses?

(5) Why have Tibetan areas not seen feminist or women's rights activism around DV or violence against women, even though this has been a significant component of women's empowerment activism in eastern China and elsewhere in Asia? [36]

Challenges of Fieldwork

Fieldwork involved numerous challenges and required various adjustments and changes of course to deal with them. The points below are by no means an exhaustive list of the challenges I encountered during fieldwork, but are instead a description of the most significant difficulties I faced. Please see Appendix 6 for a description of remaining fieldwork challenges not discussed in this section.

At the start of fieldwork, I found most of the women I interviewed were reluctant to speak openly about their marriages, even making statements that were quite difficult to believe, such as telling me they had never experienced a single argument with their husbands over the course of an eleven-year marriage. Some women may have felt worried that, as a result of our interview, they would be seen to be talking about family matters to outsiders, thereby garnering a bad reputation for themselves. In one case, a woman simply stayed quiet, refraining from saying anything in response to many of my questions when I asked her, and responding with very brief answers to other questions. To get around such problems, I sometimes asked local individuals to introduce me to talkative and gregarious women interviewees if possible.

[36] This research project adopted narrative and unstructured interviewing methods. The research assistants and I did not, therefore use a standardised interview questionnaire. We did, however, use an interview topic guide to help us remember the kinds of questions and topics we might want to ask in each interview. This topic guide is replicated in Appendix 3.

I also held a brainstorming session with my two research assistants to figure out how to get around the problem of interviewees' lack of openness. The male research assistant made some useful suggestions which, when implemented, appeared to largely fix the problem. Originally, I had refrained from mentioning 'domestic violence' or even 'couple conflict' when introducing myself and the purpose of my research to interviewees. I told interviewees that I was interested in family life and women's roles, as I did not want to use terms that might startle them or highlight the sensitivity of the topic under discussion, fearing this would suppress interviewees' openness. I was aware that a topic such as DV is often surrounded by shame and silencing pressures, and I therefore hoped to enhance interviewees' comfort to speak openly, while at the same time remaining attentive to their safety and confidentiality. As my research assistant noted during our brainstorming session, however, interviewees may have felt I was asking them questions about marital and family conflict for no good reason, without any interest in using the information to improve the situation, and they might have also felt that I was conceptually separating myself and my society from Tibetans, intending to label Tibetans as especially prone to conflict or abuse. I therefore chose to change my strategy, such that when I introduced myself to interviewees, I told them explicitly that I am interested in conflict within families and couples, and that I am even interested in such things as abuse and violence. I attempted to decrease the distance between myself and interviewees by emphasising that these problems exist everywhere, including in my own country, community, and family. I told interviewees that I may be subjected to violence or abuse in the future when I am married myself, and that there is no family without argument. I also explained that I am doing this research because I want to obtain information that can improve the situation, and I emphasised that I have no reason to gossip or talk about interviewees to others. (I also informed them that, as I had done from the beginning of

the project, that when reporting my research findings, I will not use their name, village, clan, or residence.) When I said there is not a single family in the world without conflict or argument, this tended to spur interviewees to begin conversing about the issue, as they usually responded by agreeing with this statement. In retrospect I can discern a pattern whereby the most severe experiences of DV were often recounted to me by divorced women. This suggests that divorced women may have been more open with me about their experiences, as they were no longer tied to the abusive husband and family in question. However, during fieldwork, once I changed the mode in which I approached interviewees and introduced myself to them, I felt most of the women and men I interviewed were fairly open with me.

One of the greatest hurdles I encountered during fieldwork revolved around transcription. A small number of interviewees did not allow our interview to be recorded. In these cases, I wrote down everything I could remember from the interview encounter as soon as possible after interview completion. The majority of interviewees allowed recording, however, and many interviews lasted for around an hour and a half. Although my language skills in both Tibetan and Chinese are advanced, I discovered that I could understand 80% to 90% of the content of an interview during the interview itself. This was an acceptable level of comprehension to conduct the interviews without a translator, but I felt nervous about transcribing interview recordings without the help of a native speaker. I therefore originally chose to transcribe together with my female research assistant. I planned to translate and transcribe simultaneously, listening to the Tibetan recording, asking my assistant about any portions of recording that I did not understand, and writing the transcriptions in English. However, this proved especially laborious and time-consuming, and so after attempting this method, my assistant and I switched to a new method, in

which she transcribed the interviews in Tibetan (she did not speak English), and I would simply work with the Tibetan-language transcripts.

Unbeknownst to me, however, her skills in literary Tibetan were fairly poor, even though she had recently graduated university with a degree obtained from a Tibetan-medium educational institution. Literary Tibetan is significantly different from oral Tibetan, and transcribing from oral language into written language therefore requires a process of translation. In the case of my assistant, her grammar and spelling were heavily flawed, such that a hefty chunk of words within transcripts were spelled wrong, leaving some sentences appearing to have the opposite meaning of the meaning expressed in the recording, and entire sections of recording were sometimes left un-transcribed. Tibetan language skills have been waning over time in the study region, even though the Amdo region of the Tibetan plateau enjoys stronger Tibetan language skills among the populace than any other Tibetan region. However, as a result of the increasing hegemony of Chinese and each generation's declining Tibetan language skills as compared to the previous generation, I had trouble finding individuals who could transcribe interviews well, even among university graduates who had been educated in Tibetan-medium schools.

In the case of my female research assistant, unfortunately some time passed before I discovered the extent of the flaws in her transcripts. I then began a process of finding new people to both transcribe remaining interviews and fix the interviews already transcribed by my female assistant. Eventually I found good transcribers among those working for the local Tibetan language radio and TV station, those who had previously been monks and received their Tibetan language education in the monastery, or recently graduated students with particularly good Tibetan skills. Each individual I worked with had a limited amount of time to spend

transcribing, and I therefore worked with many transcribers. The process of finding adequate transcribers as well as checking and fixing transcriptions was a time-consuming process. At least five months of fieldwork were spent primarily on transcription.

When I first began analysis of the transcripts back in Oxford, I chose to painstakingly translate every word of each transcript into English before coding and analysing. This proved too time-consuming, so I eventually switched to reading and analysing transcripts directly in Tibetan, without translating transcripts first. In the end, however, I settled upon a quick and somewhat summarised translation into English, in which I did not painstakingly translate each and every word, as I could work much faster with English text than I could with Tibetan. I then coded or analysed these 'rough and ready' English translations, and returned to the original Tibetan transcripts for clarification or elaboration when necessary. As we shall see from the discussion below regarding my analysis methods, the entire process of analysis, not to mention interviewing and fieldwork as well, was a process in which I learned over time how to conduct all the necessary activities much more efficiently than I did at the beginning.

Methods of Data Analysis

Choosing Interviews for In-Depth Analysis

When I returned from fieldwork, I was armed with 100 interview transcripts, transcribed from interview recordings that were often an hour and a half long. Interview transcripts ranged in length from approximately 20 to 60 pages, with many transcripts falling on the lengthier end of this spectrum. In addition, I possessed a fieldwork journal consisting of over 700 typed pages. In part, I had written in my journal as a way to vent frustrations, anger, or sorrow, feelings that

arose at times as a result of the difficult subject matter of my research. As a result, not all of the contents of the fieldwork journal were data that I would mine later during post-fieldwork analysis. However, much of the journal contained records of conversations, of my experiences during participant observation, and my initial thoughts and reactions to interviews. Add to this voluminous body of data the fact that the transcripts were entirely written in Tibetan, in addition to a minority of transcripts in Chinese. This meant I needed to spend two or three times as long to read each transcript when compared to the amount of time I would need to read a document of similar length in English.[37] Finally, prior to returning to Oxford from the field site, I had collected several Tibetan language books and articles touching upon topics of gender relations and women's status. I had read or skimmed these works while still in the field, often with the help of a local tutor who could help me understand any portions of text I found difficult. I returned to Oxford with the original works as well as my notes on their contents.

After returning to Oxford, I discovered some transcripts continued to require revision, and many days were therefore spent fixing and adjusting transcripts so as to make them more accurate. Given all of this, it may not seem surprising that my time was too constrained to analyse all 100 interview transcripts in depth. As analysis progressed, a process of scheduling and re-scheduling commenced, in which I attempted to work out how quickly I could complete reading and analysis of interviews, then calculated how many days, weeks, and months I could spend just on analysis, before beginning the process of writing. Based on this, I would decide on a total

[37] While reading transcripts, I often consulted a dictionary regarding particular vocabulary words. I also periodically relied on a Tibetan friend residing in Oxford to clarify particular phrases or sentences that I found difficult to understand. Often, a return to the original interview recording was enough to clarify any questions regarding meaning that I encountered. When both this method and consultation with a dictionary did not serve to answer my questions, however, I took any remaining questions to my friend.

number of interviews to analyse. I then looked through my list of interviews to decide which interviews were most important and which interviews could therefore be culled from the list for in-depth analysis. Once a schedule (listing how many pages of transcript I needed to read or analyse each day) was made, a week or so later I inevitably discovered I was behind. It would dawn upon me that I was actually not able to read or analyse as quickly as I had hoped. I would then rein in my ambitions regarding the volume of data I would cover in the DPhil, culling more interviews from the list, and making a new schedule in the process. This pattern of scheduling and re-scheduling occurred several times over the course of analysis.

Prior to beginning this process, I realised I needed a summary of all the interviews, so as to have a better idea of which interviews to include and which to exclude. I skimmed through each transcript, then wrote a short, one-paragraph summary of each one. I also created a table listing which interviewees were victims, perpetrators, those with second-hand stories of abuse, or those with anything else interesting to say about gender norms and relations generally. For in-depth analysis, I eventually chose 56 out of the 100 interviews. These 56 interviews therefore form the core of data upon which this thesis is built.

As I undertook this process, I prioritised interviews for inclusion on the basis of a number of criteria. The interviews of victims and perpetrators with firsthand experience of DV were given precedence. Within victim and perpetrator interviews, I did not discriminate on the basis of severity. A very wide range of severity was therefore incorporated, including both minor and acute physical violence, emotional and other forms of abuse. I also included cases which can be said to be mildly or only potentially abusive, as these cases allowed me to question how levels of severity impacted local definitions of abuse and local responses. Those with deep knowledge

about friends or family members' DV, who gave a lot of detail about their friends' or family members' cases, were also prioritised. Any cases of DV or potential DV, either related as firsthand experience or secondhand, which seemed unusual or displayed a pattern unlike other cases were prioritised. Finally, those interviewees who had a lot to say about gender norms, roles, and relations in the study area, including anyone with something unusual to say, were focused upon. However, with some of this latter group of interviewees, time constraints led me to mark the particular points of interest which were stated by the interviewee, without undertaking a thorough analysis of the entire transcript. In addition, the choice of interviews for inclusion within the group of 56 was affected by the specific topic of each article within this thesis. After the initial stages of analysis, I began to get a sense of which topics I wanted to focus upon in the various thesis articles. Some interview transcripts were therefore chosen because of their particular relevance to the topic of one or more of the thesis articles.

It is worth mentioning that I had conducted a majority of interviews myself and so retained a memory of those encounters. I had also jotted notes on my initial reactions to some interviews in my fieldwork journal, and I skimmed through each transcript when summarising them. All the 100 interviews therefore impacted my analysis and conclusions, as I became somewhat familiar with all of them.

Please see Appendix 2 for a listing of the age and education status of interviewees. Policy actors and their line of work, as well as the interviews chosen for in-depth analysis, are all highlighted in this appendix

Grounded Theory Principles

My methods of data collection and analysis were partially in line with grounded theory methodology, as I aimed to discover themes and patterns emerging from the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I also allowed my focus to shift towards the priorities and definitions of interviewees rather than insisting on imposing my own conceptual paradigms and framework onto the data. I followed interesting or unexpected leads that emerged within interviews, by adjusting my interview questions to focus more on new ideas and concepts as they emerged during fieldwork. In all these ways, my methods were in line with grounded theory principles. However, I did not engage in a systematic form of simultaneous data coding, data analysis, and data collection *while fieldwork was ongoing*, as is stipulated within the grounded theory approach. My approach therefore builds from grounded theory principles but does not fall in line with grounded theory in every way (Charmaz, 2001, 2008). As Charmaz states, "At present many qualitative researchers conduct simultaneous data gathering and analysis but do not necessarily use explicit comparative methods or adopt grounded theory forms of coding data" (2008, p. 162). My approach was similar to the "many qualitative researchers" to whom Charmaz refers.

Coding and Multiple Case Study Analysis

During the first stage of coding and analysis, I analysed 25 transcripts, and as I realised later, this period was a learning process marked by mistakes and delays. During this stage, I ended up with over a hundred codes, many of which I added into the coding framework after I had already completed the coding of several interviews. As a result, interviews analysed earlier were coded with a smaller number of thematic codes than later interviews. This left me unable to read across all 25 interviews in the case of many codes. In addition, the number of codes and sub-codes

were so numerous that they did not in fact simplify the process of identifying salient information in the transcripts or making broader conclusions about patterns that held across transcripts. I was left often returning to the original transcripts, all of which I was in any case very familiar with by now, to access relevant information and make conclusions. In addition to this, I found coding to be unnecessarily time-consuming, as I did not actually engage in much analysis during the process of coding. Instead, coding was a mechanical process in which I looked for themes, and I intended to look into each theme so as to compare and contrast across interviews, as well as make conclusions, *after* coding. Therefore, a lot of time was spent coding, after which the 'real' analysis process could begin.

In addition to the problem of the amount of time absorbed by coding, time which was not spent in proper analysis, another problem was that coding tended to leave me with a lot of very individual, interview-specific codes and comments, making broader conclusions and generalisations across interviews difficult. I found that coding led unfortunately to the extrapolation of particular pieces of text from the overall context of each interview. This was less than ideal, because DV can only be identified by the broader pattern of behaviours, attitudes, and contexts which, together, can be defined as abusive. A single slap, punch, or belittling comment is not enough to understand DV dynamics within a marriage or household. Moreover, some interviewees were married twice, and I needed to bear in mind which marriage they were referring to when speaking about an instance or relationship. I also needed to conceptually separate secondhand stories from the first-hand stories of interviewees, when both types of stories occurred within a single interview. As a result, extrapolating individual sentences or paragraphs from each transcript via coding left me with pieces of transcript that I could compare across, but these pieces were absent of the crucial context I needed to understand and make sense

of the data. This, in addition to the time-consuming nature of coding, led me at first to attempt to restrict the number of thematic codes I used (at one point, I allowed myself no more than ten thematic codes), but eventually to abandon coding altogether. Instead, I began to summarise each transcript such that the summarised interview was usually only several pages long. Within each summary, I included all data relevant to DV, to power relations, and to gender relations within the household in question. Moreover, as I was very familiar with the interviews, I could easily return to the original transcript for a particular quote or piece of information.

Charmaz states that her "ideas and leads emerged while [she] grappled with the coding rather than from a reading of the entire interview" (2008, p. 164). In my case, many ideas and leads came from the extensive annotations I wrote while reading through and translating transcripts into English, an activity I undertook prior to summarising or coding. Within these annotations, I wrote my initial thoughts and reactions, and interrogated contradictions or points that confused me. Thus, annotating was the start of a process of making conclusions, while summarising each interview down to size allowed me to make the transcripts manageable enough to deal with all of the transcripts in comparison.

The process of summarising each case, then analysing across cases, can be described as 'multiple case study analysis.' Multiple case study analysis builds upon grounded theory principles, and is a means by which to compare and contrast cases *after* becoming thoroughly versed in each case individually (Eisenhardt, 2002; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). When gathering data in the field, the choice of cases is also driven by theoretical considerations. Thus the choice of cases to study is a form of purposive sampling underpinned by one's particular theoretical focus.

This form of analysis can be enhanced by dividing data by source so as to triangulate information. Another tactic is to select two cases or two groups of cases, then look at similarities and differences between the two. "The juxtaposition of seemingly similar cases by a researcher looking for differences can break simplistic frames," states Eisenhardt, adding further that "the search for similarity in a seemingly different pair can [also] lead to more sophisticated understanding" (2002, p. 18).

When conducting multiple case study analysis, I counted each 'household' as a single case. Therefore, if an individual was married twice, her first marriage and all the family relationships associated with that marriage counted as a single case, while her second marriage and the contexts around it were counted as a second case. If this interviewee also spoke about DV occurring to her cousin and to her sister, her cousin's marriage and household were counted as a single case, while her sister's marriage and household relationships were counted as yet another case. This method of analysis allowed me to include the varying family relationships existing in each household within the complexity of each individual case.

I was very careful about any assertions I made in the thesis articles, as I did not want to unduly over-generalise by exaggerating a single interviewee's statements or those of a small number of interviewees, such that I erroneously believed and portrayed these to be representative of a broader pattern displayed by many. While writing articles, therefore, I marked the data upon which each statement was based. I cited which interviews or where in my fieldwork journal a certain piece of information derived. In this way, I made sure that no assertion was based on a single interviewee's statement or a single conversation recorded in my fieldwork journal alone. Rather, every assertion was an assertion that I felt comfortable making because it was replicated

across the statements of several interviewees at once, or came from interviewee data in addition to participant observation recordings, or came from these as well as published Tibetan-language literature or popular songs or folk stories.

Reflections

In undertaking this thesis, I have worked across bodies of literature that in themselves do not facilitate an understanding of the Tibetan context. Work on Tibetan society tends to focus on religious practice, while work on Tibetan gender relations has emphasised prominent female religious practitioners, both historically and currently, as well as nuns and nunneries (Benard, 2015; Diemberger, 2007; Havnevik, 2002, 2006; Jacoby, 2015; Kemmerer, 2011; Mrozik, 2009; Schneider, 2010, 2015; Tsomo, 1987). As Gyatso and Havnevik have noted, the organisation of gender relations within the family and the relative economic positions of women and men have been neglected in Tibetology (2005). On the other hand, as the available theories and evidence on intimate partner violence are built primarily on United States and Western country data, very little work accounts for the perspectives or experiences of women in the global South. In other words, neither of the bodies of theory at my disposal deal with the lives and experiences of ordinary Tibetan women.

Local women's and community members' perspectives and experiences are crucial, however, as any attempt to understand a phenomenon as sensitive, personal, and contingent as DV will be woefully inept in its comprehension of the problem without a deep awareness of local context. Indeed, the most basic paradigms and assumptions underpinning my understanding of abuse did not accord with the values and practices occurring in the study setting, and I was forced to reevaluate my entire conceptualisation of the problem. As a result, this thesis questions the ethics of imposing foreign notions of abuse onto local communities, and queries the concept of abuse itself, as I was forced to grapple with the confusion I initially felt when I encountered victims of violence and abuse who did not always consider their experiences to have been

traumatic, abusive, or unacceptable. This thesis also explores the priorities of local women's empowerment activists. For these activists, empowering women has virtually no relation to counteracting belittling treatment of women within their communities or opposing violence against women. While many Western scholars argue ethical transnational feminist practice lies in supporting local women's movements and allowing local feminists' priorities to take centre stage, our consideration of ethical questions must go deeper, in order to question how outsiders to a community should ethically operate in the event that our most basic values prove incommensurate with each other. This is the issue I delve into in the first article of this thesis.

Overall, this thesis highlights the importance of local social structure, local norms, and local economic arrangements – factors often encompassed within the word 'culture' – and the extent to which awareness of cultural variation can be sidelined in favour of Eurocentric viewpoints. Kandiyoti's work on patriarchy in many Asian contexts describes a complex landscape of extended family living arrangements, in which mothers-in-law can be abusers, and in which a woman may suffer abuse when first married, but may later grow into an abuser herself by oppressing her daughter-in-law. Such phenomena are not only tied with "class, race and ethnicity," writes Kandiyoti, but with "the complicated emotional (and material) calculus implied by different organisations of the domestic realm" as well (2005, p. 144). Patrilocal versus matrilocal marriage, household arrangements for economic production, gender divisions of labour, divorce and child custody practices, discourses around Tibetan identity and around normative gendered behaviour are some of the various factors that can be heavily implicated in abuse and how it is dealt with by communities in this region. The structural foundations of society and families therefore emerge as central in understanding DV in this part of the world.

I believe this thesis highlights the delicacy, the intricacy, and the challenges of working through the ethics of transnational feminist research and practice, as well as the sensitivity required to comprehend violence against women in a context with a culture that is widely divergent from the researcher's own. I have found, however, that some transgressions, usually more severe ones, tend to be met with disapproval across cultures. This can act as the basis or starting point of transnational conversations or collaborations. Ultimately, it is necessary to pair a lucid understanding of existing local structures and values with a commitment to feminist ethics that is receptive, flexible, and always ready and willing to listen deeply to the priorities of local individuals, regardless of the extent of divergence of their values from one's own. Respect for those we work with, recognition of their strength and agency despite difficult circumstances, and the humility to learn as much as possible from those we are interviewing and interacting with, is essential, and must be coupled with a willingness to question even one's most strongly held convictions, paradigms, and assumptions.

I must express my sincere gratitude to the women and men who allowed me to interview them. These individuals gave me their time, brought me into their homes, were candid and open about their lives, and even told me detailed stories about their most difficult experiences. The graciousness of the many local friends and acquaintances who assisted me was immense, and I could never have carried out this project without them. These friends introduced me to interviewees, allowed me to stay in their homes, and even took me on rides to remote nomadic settlements which I would not be able to find on my own. The hospitality I was given, at every turn, left me feeling truly privileged.

DV is a sad and difficult issue. However, it was uplifting to talk to many interviewees who had not been abused, as well as to women who had suffered horrific abuse but who are now free of their abusive marriages. The resilience and strength of women who have suffered immensely, as well as their ability to move on to more positive and healthy lives, is profound and should not be forgotten.

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ARTICLE 1

The Ethics of Transnational Feminist Research and Activism: An Argument for a More Comprehensive View

Background

The ethics of feminist research and activism undertaken by global Northerners operating in the global South has been a topic of ongoing debate for a number of years.[38] Research or commentary undertaken by individuals from or based in the global North into issues such as rape, domestic violence, forced marriage, honour killings, the seclusion or veiling of women, or female genital cutting (FGC) occurring in the global South are fraught with ethical questions around misunderstanding of local viewpoints and ethnocentric imposition of alien norms.[39]

Scholars have noted that the notion of individual rights does not necessarily accord with the cultural values of a number of societies, in which conceptions of the individual do not rest on ideas of deep autonomy and relative detachment from one's community (Abu-Lhugod, 2013; Kalev, 2004). Others argue that fighting for women's rights or gender equality is not necessarily what their communities need.[40] However, as Jaggar notes, outsiders' desire to refrain from criticising specific practices in the name of cultural relativism may reveal "misplaced concern for 'the community' as a whole at the expense of some women within it." In the end, "ignoring the

[38] (Hesford & Kozol, 2005; Jaggar, 1998; Nagar, 2013; Staeheli & Nagar, 2002; Sultana, 2007)

[39] (Abu-Lhugod, 2013; Hesford & Kozol, 2005; Kalev, 2004; Phillips, 2010)

[40] Some, for example, argue indigenous cultures historically gave women a very high status and therefore a return to indigenous traditions is more necessary than gender equality as it is currently conceived (Duarte, 2012; St. Denis, 2013). Others, however, respond by arguing that indigenous societies have been heavily influenced by Euro-American patriarchy, and that feminism is therefore relevant to indigenous communities (Hall, 2009; St. Denis, 2013). Some also respond by pointing to the fact that feminisms are not all the same, and that many versions of feminism adequately address issues of ethnic or cultural hegemony and marginalisation (Hall, 2009; St. Denis, 2013).

plight of such women [may be] racist or ethnocentric, insofar as it suggests a moral double standard according to which high levels of abuse and exploitation are regarded as 'culturally acceptable' for some women but not for others" (Jaggar, 1998, p. 10).

Much has been written about these dilemmas and about how to ethically engage in transnational feminist research and practice. In this article, I describe and interrogate the various arguments that have been proposed. I then propose an alternative argument, drawing on the most promising positions of other scholars and adding to these to arrive at a more comprehensive proposal.

Categories such as 'global North' and 'global South' themselves warrant problematisation, as such conceptions do not always reflect the reality of transnational interactions. Many of the arguments below, however, are relevant to any cross-cultural or transnational activity, including South-South and intra-state interactions.

The Problem

Activism undertaken by individuals from the global North, popular opinion in Northern countries, and even Northern governments' immigration and international relations policies have often rested on notions of saving Southern women from oppressive traditional practices. These notions have often included a heavy dose of ethnocentric and neo-colonial bias. This bias positions Northern societies as enlightened and advanced, as opposed to backwards societies of the global South, seen as particularly prone to restrict women's freedom, independence, and happiness.[41] As many analysts have noted, such bias is condescending and illegitimate.[42] Stone-

[41] (Abu-Lhugod, 2013; Gangoli, 2014; Patil, 2013; Smith, 2011; Ticktin, 2011)

[42] (Abu-Lhugod, 2013; Smith, 2011; Stone-Mediatore, 2009; Sultana, 2007)

Mediatore, for example, notes that "many educated women [in indigenous and religious communities] have found rich and empowering values in religious sources and…western feminists who assume that those women can only be liberated by joining secular western culture exercise a condescending paternalism similar to patriarchy" (2009, p. 65). Such racist or ethnocentric biases can have serious negative repercussions, such as irrationally designed, ineffective, or even harmful interventions by international NGOs (Smith, 2011; Stone-Mediatore, 2009), or policies by which asylum seekers are only granted asylum if their personal histories help to further the Northern state's narrative of itself as superior to the global South (Ticktin, 2011). Concern for women's rights was, moreover, used as justification for war in Afghanistan and Iraq, effectively placing a positive face on a destructive enterprise for the sake of public relations (Abu-Lhugod, 2013; Stone-Mediatore, 2009).

Within the realm of scholarly research, analysts have voiced concerns about power inequalities in research interactions, the question of whether researchers have the right to represent the voice of the researched, and the spectre of neo-colonialist stereotyping or Western-centric bias that does not adequately allow for the voice of the researched to come through.[43] Some researchers have, however, pointed out that the divide between Western researcher and non-Western research participant is not so clear or simple to delineate, as many researchers can be said to be both insiders and outsiders of the communities they are researching, or can be defined as researchers from the global South investigating communities of the global South (Miraftab, 2004; Sultana, 2007). However, Southern feminist activists can be accused of being Westernised by others within their communities, seen as no longer authentic community members (Jaggar, 1998).

[43] (Abu-Lhugod, 2013; Fonow & Cook, 2005; Jaggar, 1998; Phillips, 2010)

Southern feminists may also enact very similar patterns of privilege or imposition of alien norms vis-à-vis the communities they work with (Abu-Lhugod, 2013). As Sultana states, "the 'native' can be the 'other' through class privilege" (2007, p. 377).

Analysts have argued that external intervention, especially when undertaken without sufficient understanding of local context, often causes more problems than it solves (Abu-Lhugod, 2013; Stone-Mediatore, 2009). It has been argued that external intervention to end practices deemed oppressive to women can actually cause the entrenchment and solidification of harmful local practices and norms (Smith, 2011; Stone-Mediatore, 2009). As Fisher states, "traditional notions of masculinity are rigorously defended when cultures feel under threat from external pressures…The result can be an increase in rigidity of cultural practices and increased gender inequality" (2013, p. 839) As stated by Stone-Mediatore:

> In some cases, attempts by foreigners to champion the cause of other women thwart productive discussion within those women's communities, sometimes by silencing the women on whose behalf they attempt to speak and sometimes by compelling women who have been working for change within their communities to defend problematic cultural practices, when outsiders have intervened without understanding the social significance of the practices they condemned. In other cases, international women's-rights campaigns have created a local backlash against indigenous women, who have been working through their own channels to address abuse but whose efforts have been endangered by international campaigns that link the women with foreign powers. (Stone-Mediatore, 2009, p. 61)

External intervention or commentary on issues of women's rights are, therefore, often unfairly patronising, or alternatively are ill-advised and characterised by lack of sufficient knowledge of local context and concerns. Indeed, Northern discussion of Southern women's rights is sometimes critiqued for inaccurately essentialising culture, homogenising groups that include disparate individuals, and ignoring voices of dissent that exist within Southern communities against some of those communities' own practices (Hesford & Kozol, 2005; Patil, 2013; Phillips, 2010).

Responses to the Problem

Focusing on Cross-Border Relationships and on History

One point emphasised by many scholars is that gender constructs and relations, as they occur in contemporary post-colonial regions, are in many ways a product of colonial-era impositions. European colonisation, it is argued, has imposed a Western style of patriarchy (Oyewumi, 1997; Patil, 2013; Shoemaker, 1995). Others argue colonial-era racism and its legacies have catalysed a stark turn for the worse in the treatment of women (Kandirikirira, 2002; C. E. Makley, 2002; Poupart, 2003). This leads to the contention that relationships and impacts crossing national borders should receive greater attention in feminist analyses, as should historical legacies (Patil, 2013).

Recognising the Fluidity of 'Culture'

As a number of scholars argue, culture is not monolithic. Mores are contested, and any ideology or moral code that appears dominant or prevalent will have numerous detractors and dissidents

who themselves belong to the society in question (Hutchings, 2013; Sen, 1999; Stone-Mediatore, 2009). This leads to the argument that moral values are not always incommensurate across cultures (Hutchings, 2013; Sen, 1999). Stone-Mediatore, for example, states that every culture "offers insights that can contribute to the continuing development of women's rights" (2009, 66).

Interrogating Societies Equally

Numerous scholars also emphasise the importance of recognising that practices and cultural environments in both the global South and the global North are often deeply harmful to women.[44] Cornwall contends that researchers should focus more on the harms to women caused by practices in Western societies. Reminding us that women's eagerness to alter their bodies to align with "ideals of the 'proper' or 'real' woman" is by no means restricted to countries which practice female genital cutting (FGC), Cornwall refers to anthropology's 'moral purpose' as directing our gaze to the similarities between Western practices and non-Western ones such as FGC. She reminds us, for example, that "amongst the most common plastic surgery procedures in the United Kingdom are breast augmentation for women and breast reduction for men" (2012, pp. 358–359). Abu-Lughod, furthermore, points out the double standard by which Northern commentators decry oppression of women in distant lands. Within popular publications recounting oppression of Southern women, states Abu-Lughod:

> No quotes appear from reports like that of the U.S. Justice Department, whose national survey indicated that one in every six American women has been raped in her lifetime, usually by an intimate or someone else she knows. They do not mention Peggy Sunday's

[44] (Abu-Lhugod, 2013; Cornwall, 2012; Smith, 2011; Stone-Mediatore, 2009)

> research on the white, middle-class culture of college fraternities, where getting women drunk so that guys can 'score,' even gang-raping their guests and boasting about it the next day, is acceptable. Nothing is said about the alarming rates of domestic violence and murder of spouses that shadow returning veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. (Abu-Lhugod, 2013, p. 63)

While the above scholars argue for a recognition of the fact that the oppressions faced by women in Northern contexts is often as harmful as the circumstances encountered by Southern women, Smith takes this argument even further. Smith argues for a method by which a roughly equivalent phenomenon is found in one's own culture, then deliberately placed in front of women in the scrutinised culture. Her aim is for members of both societies to learn by looking beyond their own context, and to expand their awareness by hearing about the reactions of others to their own context. She uses breast implantation surgery in the United States and FGC in parts of Africa as her example. She therefore interviews African respondents on their views and understandings of FGC, then explains the practice of breast implantation surgery to the same respondents in order to get their reactions and feelings regarding this phenomenon. Smith undertakes a similar pattern of questioning in the United States, asking her U.S. respondents for their views on both breast implants and FGC. In this way, Smith aims to expose both Northern and Southern societies to scrutiny. By sharing her research findings, she hopes that both Northern and Southern individuals will learn from new perspectives on their own home settings, thereby perhaps igniting a feminist consciousness among both groups of individuals. Smith advocates this type of practice as a deliberate method, a means of counteracting ethnocentrism in transnational feminist practice (Smith, 2011; see also Baum, 2004).

Dialogue and Support for Southern Women's Priorities

A number of commentators argue for dialogue, listening to Southern women, and ensuring Southern women's voices are heard. Analysts have noted the importance of remaining wary of the dangers of othering, of stereotyping, of making assumptions rather than listening to the voices of the women we research with full openness to their lived experiences and views, regardless of how different those views may be from our own.[45] Thus, the power to represent others, and the potential harms that this entails, particularly with regards to stigmatising and silencing Southern women, is a power that has been interrogated by feminist academics.

Ways that have been proposed to undermine undue powers of the researcher to 'speak for' and represent those she has researched include participatory research methods, such that research participants take an active role in research design, data collection, and analysis (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Skinner, Hester, & Malos, 2005); taking active steps to reduce the power inequalities between differently positioned researchers on a research team or between researchers and participants (L. Johnson, 2008; Skinner et al., 2005); and collaborative authorship of research products (Nagar, 2002, 2013).

Supporting Southern women or Southern feminists in their own struggles is likewise emphasised. In this way, it is argued that the desires and wishes of Southern women or Southern feminists are given priority, and attempts to impose Western ideals with insufficient understanding of local culture, meanings, and values are prevented (Smith, 2011; Stone-Mediatore, 2009).

[45] (Abu-Lhugod, 2013; Jaggar, 1998; Kalev, 2004; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Skinner et al., 2005)

As Kimberly Hutchings states, issues of "transnational distributive justice, the ethics of war or other kinds of cross-border intervention" cannot be addressed without considering how to arrive at a code of just and ethical action that is acceptable cross-culturally (2013, p. 81). Benhabib makes a proposition for arriving at such a code of ethics, one that is applicable across the divides of culture and power. Feminists from different places, argues Benhabib, must dialogue under principles of 'universal respect' and 'egalitarian reciprocity,' because "it is only on the basis of this 'universal respect' and 'egalitarian reciprocity' that the plurality of different women can be guaranteed participation in moral discourse in the first place" (Hutchings, 2013, p. 93).

Benhabib's push for egalitarian, respectful, and reciprocal dialogue has been criticised, however, since those without any commonality of purpose do not, in practice, converse about moral values. As stated by Hutchings, "principles of universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity rule out certain kinds of identities/groups and certain kinds of arguments in advance." Moreover, Benhabib's proposal inevitably directs dialogue towards biased outcomes. As Hutchings states, "In practice, it becomes clear that the conditions underpinning the discourses needed to agree on global moral norms are stringently liberal. They therefore require a high degree of coincidence of moral starting points in the first place, which cannot in fact be taken for granted" (2013, pp. 95–97). The result, then, is dialogue that is not actually inclusive. If the goal is to work respectfully across great divides in outlook and worldview, a dialogue that is not inclusive of various voices is surely inadequate.

Young also criticises Benhabib, arguing that Benhabib's call for cross-cultural dialogue under principles of egalitarianism, reciprocity, and respect involves "a tendency to assimilate difference to sameness, by always assuming the other's point of view will be intelligible in the self's own

terms." Young argues this is problematic, since the point is not to look for how another's views fit with one's own paradigm but to "suspend [one's] assumptions in order to [truly] listen" (Hutchings, 2013, pp. 93–94). Additional to this is the practical question of how to bring people with vastly different amounts of power and resources to the same table of dialogue without minimising or silencing certain voices (Baum, 2004).

Calls for dialogue with Southern women and for the importance of making Southern women's priorities central, moreover, often assume a common feminist cause. Nagar, for example, has written about utilising research to create knowledge that is both considered useful by the communities which the researcher has worked with and accessible to critique by those communities (Nagar, 2002, 2013). Nagar herself works with a community that engages in political activism around economic rights for Dalit woman and men in India, including empowerment initiatives for poor women. This activist community is intent on promoting nonhierarchical relations among its members, a practice that Nagar describes as being in line with a feminist ethic (2013). Nagar has additionally studied women's street theatre activism on domestic violence, a project she undertook at the request of the women involved (2002).

In Nagar's case, not only is a politically active movement already under way such that she is able to collaborate with its members, there is also a strong set of shared values, since both Nagar and the community members with whom she works are actively promoting an ethic of non-hierarchical relationships. Feminist researchers and activists may not always work with communities holding to values that are so close to a feminist ethos. Yet how are we to operate ethically in a context in which such similarity in values is rare or nonexistent? Other scholars also tend to assume common feminist cause between community insiders and outsiders when

they call for outsiders to support movements spearheaded by Southern women. Thus, in her description of Benhabib's work, Hutchings refers to egalitarian and respectful dialogue between "*feminist* actors in different places and radically different cultures" (Hutchings, 2013, p. 93, emphasis mine). Stone-Mediatore calls for Northern feminists to listen to and support Southern women in the struggles of the Southern women's own making, but her argument assumes the Southern women in question are already working towards their own empowerment (Stone-Mediatore, 2009). Likewise, Smith makes a point of listening to Southern women's own feelings regarding female genital cutting (FGC). In so doing, however, she appears to assume Southern women are themselves interested in dialogue about this issue, when in fact an interest in FGC is a focus spearheaded by Smith herself (2011). Even Mohanty, whose argument is more nuanced than other scholars, in that it decries Northerners' tendency to "[domesticate] women-of-color epistemology in ways that either erase or assimilate it into a Eurocentric feminist globality," describes ethical feminist efforts as those that work closely with the priorities of *feminists* in other societies (2013, p. 981). When she argues for the importance of "according epistemic privilege to the most marginalized communities of women," she is assuming those women are members of activist and feminist communities (2013, p. 985; see also Mohanty, 2003). Such assumptions of common feminist cause completely sidestep the issue of how to engage in transnational feminist practice with communities with whom we encounter more fundamental disagreement.

How, then, should feminist activism be undertaken when collaborating with an ongoing activist movement is not an option, because such a movement does not exist, or when community members who openly oppose oppressive structures are not easily found? What of situations in which a majority of community members find relating to each other in a non-hierarchical spirit is

an alien concept that does not accord with their conception of their own needs? How is feminist activism to be undertaken when common convictions are not readily apparent? In such a case, is any feminist activism undertaken by community outsiders ethically acceptable, and if so, what form should this activism take? We might note that, when working in contexts within which local values do not primarily adhere to many feminist principles, conducting feminist research or activism may cause harm, since women's feminist consciousness may be raised within an environment in which their newfound views are unwelcome and cause isolation. As Maynard states, "Feminists have raised questions about the ethics of research which, having generated all sorts of issues in respondents' minds, then abandons them to come to terms with these on their own" (1994, p. 17).

Moreover, what are the ethical implications and potential unintended negative consequences of providing funding or other types of support to groups of women's activists who, in their feminist and political beliefs, may be a minority within their communities, may work to upset the existing power balance in society, and may be disliked by various segments of their communities? Calls for dialogue, listening, and supporting women's priorities do not adequately address the question of how to interact with groups with whom we face fundamental differences. Equally, such calls do not adequately address the question of the ethics of placing external money or power or support behind individuals within a community working towards women's empowerment, in cases within which such individuals are opposed by others within the same community.

Thus far, as noted above, the arguments that cross-cultural dialogue can make transnational feminist practice ethical are arguments that have conveniently sidestepped the issue of how to deal with differences of opinion when those differences are much deeper than the types of

disagreements that can occur between self-identifying feminists coming from different cultures. I doubt, for example, that a Northern feminist would advocate supporting a group of women who are clearly pushing for the entrenchment of patriarchy – for example, if a group of Southern women were to advocate for men to beat their wives *more.*

Limitations of Universal Visions of Morality

Judith Butler argues that any moral stance has limitations because a moral code which is truly universally applicable – that is, a moral code which can apply equally to all human beings, across cultures – is essentially unknowable (Hutchings, 2013; see also Baum, 2004). Butler further argues for "a process of cultural translation" as the basis of ethical transnational dialogue about moral values or about human rights. "Genuine translation," explains Hutchings, is about "forging common ground" in such a way that the parties to dialogue are "recognising the limits of mutual intelligibility" (Hutchings, 2013, pp. 102–103). That is, one cannot assume concepts and paradigms will always translate directly across cultures. Some element of mutual *un*intelligibility is therefore possible or even likely when engaging in transnational dialogues about ethics. In the process of engaging in this dialogue, argues Butler, one must allow for the possibility of mutual transformation, such that the other's views are transformed just as are the views of oneself (Hutchings, 2013). That is, the endeavour is not to convince others of one's own moral code or even to ensure the other fully understands one's views. The endeavour is about dialogue and interaction, within which mutual transformation of both parties is part and parcel of the process.

Theories Arising from the Global South

Southern women's feminist theorising often reflects the political and economic realities of marginalised women's positionality, reminding us that we cannot assume Euro-American theories are directly applicable to other parts of the world. This section looks at theories arising from feminist activist spaces of the global South or from subaltern feminist theorists, in order to understand how subaltern feminists have navigated marginalisation and interaction with more privileged groups. The ways in which subaltern women have grappled with these issues can provide insights into questions of transnational or cross-cultural feminist ethics.

Marginalisation in Feminist Spaces

Numerous women of colour have expressed dissatisfaction with feminist theories "that [elevate] gender at the expense of race or class identity" (St. Denis, 2013, p. 24; see also Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). The same can be said of indigenous and lesbian feminisms in Latin America (Duarte, 2012). States Duarte, "Indigenous feminists [in Latin America] have questioned liberal feminism, stating that it responds to the needs of white or mestiza, urban upper- and middle-class women, and not to the realities of indigenous women" (2012, p. 161). At times, women of colour or women from marginalised groups have faced ethnocentrism and dismissiveness when collaborating with mainstream or liberal feminists. In fact, priorities can be so skewed that the concerns of marginalised women may be deliberately devalued. States Duarte, "erasing lesbians from the feminist agenda in the name of 'greater feminist victories' remains one of the fundamental challenges for the Latin American lesbian movement" (2012, p. 166).

Hall describes how she has drawn upon African-American theorists to enhance her own feminism, but also criticises black or women-of-colour feminism for its lack of relevance to

indigenous women's experiences, particularly Hawaiian indigenous women. States Hall, "The insights of U.S. black feminist thought…often displayed the same kinds of omissions and erasures (in this case, directed toward non-black women of color in general and indigenous women in particular) that they brilliantly critiqued within the work of white scholars" (2009, p. 17).

In response to mainstream feminists' desire to push lesbian issues off the feminist agenda, lesbian groups in Latin America have stressed that compulsory heterosexuality as an institutionalised cultural construct is fundamental to women's overall oppression (Duarte, 2012). In this view, opposing compulsory heterosexuality cannot be disentangled from the struggle for women's rights more generally.

In China, certain strands of Western feminism were felt to offer conceptual tools irrelevant to Chinese women's experience. Instead of operating with these relatively irrelevant tools, therefore, feminists in China have felt the need to assert their identity as women, and as different from men. This need resulted from the historically "orthodox Marxist position of treating the women's question entirely under the heading of class" (Dongchao, 2005, p. 283). Some Chinese feminists therefore felt women's oppression was not founded in the fact that women were "made to symbolise the body", as was the case in some Western settings, but in the fact that "political or ideological discourse had rendered women invisible". It was felt that "the important task at hand was to awaken an awareness of gender identity among women, through claiming bodily differences and the physiological and psychological experiences that are particular to women" (Dongchao, 2005, p. 284). Similar discourses of class and gender, resulting in similar difficulties

when promoting women's rights, have been found in parts of central and eastern Europe as well (Havelkova, 2016).

Indigenous women in parts of Canada and Latin America have argued that colonialism, loss of land, and racism "are more pressing concerns than achieving gender equality" (St. Denis 2013 pg. 20; Duarte 2012). Others argue that the focus on individuals and individual rights often found in feminist thought is short-sighted. Complaints of excessive individuality in feminism, however, do not necessarily lead indigenous women to a wholesale rejection of feminist thought. Some argue for a concept of *collective* emancipation rather than rights and equality for *individuals*, in which feminism's focus on individual rights should be incorporated, while a move beyond this point to a concept of collective rights is warranted. Such a move would allow for the preservation of indigenous culture, natural resources, and territory (Duarte, 2012; Hall, 2009). Some argue that "complementarity and reciprocity" are more important than the concept of equality (Duarte, 2012), while others describe concepts of collective action by which individuals are deeply intertwined and "there is no easy division between speaker and audience, meaning and context" (Hall, 2009, p. 32; Duarte, 2012).

While some thinkers have seen reason to critique feminism because of its perceived individuality, Richa Nagar speaks of a true feminist ethic as one that is deeply collectivist. Nagar implies that it is necessary for the transnational activist to live with local individuals, experience life the way locals live it, and most importantly, become part of a collective social experience. She implies feminist activism is about spending a lot of time with the groups one is working with, such that group members become deeply and personally enmeshed in each others' lives (2014).

Addressing the Questioning of Loyalties

While indigenous feminists have been marginalised within mainstream feminist movements, they have also faced pressure from their own communities to reject feminism. Not only are indigenous women in some contexts told "that one's first loyalty is to one's nation, race or culture, above gender, and that to challenge oppression by one's own community is to betray it," they also "risk being dismissed as 'assimilated' [by mainstream society] if they identify with feminist politics" (St. Denis, 2013, p. 25; Hall, 2009). Similar sensitivities have been faced by Tibetan women (Rajan, 2015), in Algeria (St. Denis, 2013), and in India (Mani, 1990).

Power relations with the authorities or with mainstream society clearly impact sensitivities around discord or lack of unity within underprivileged communities. Such sensitivities may arise from the need to maintain community resilience in the face of colonialism or oppression (Rajan 2015). Immediate logistical concerns may also underscore anxieties around community unity. States St. Denis, "disagreements within our communities can not only discourage critical debate among ourselves but can be used as a justification by dominant institutions to ignore Aboriginal claims for social justice" (2013, p. 26). In one case, an article was co-authored by a white Australian woman and an Aboriginal woman. As Jaggar explains:

> This article exposed astronomical rates of violence and rape, including frequent gangrape, committed by Aboriginal men against Aboriginal women. The truth of the allegations was undisputed, but some Aboriginal women objected that it was inappropriate for this topic to be broached by a white woman, even in collaboration with an Aborigine. (Jaggar, 1998, p. 9)

In this case, revealing community problems to outsiders was "experienced as a form of betrayal" because those outsiders belonged to a more powerful group "claim[ing] cultural superiority" (Jaggar, 1998, p. 20).

In response to such sensitivities, indigenous, subaltern, or minority feminists have argued they are not being divisive, but realistic; their feminism enriches rather than detracts from the wider movements for emancipation undertaken by their communities; and women's emancipation is part and parcel of the nation's or community's emancipation at large (Duarte, 2012; Ebunoluwa, 2009; La Rue, 1995; St. Denis, 2013).

Gender Violence as Deriving from Colonialism

One line of argument, specifically related to violence against women, posits that the legacy of colonialism and discrimination leads members of marginalised communities to internalise dominant racist stereotypes, thereby reducing their self-esteem (Franklin II, 1984; B. Johnson, 2010; Poupart, 2003; Snider, 2007). It is also asserted that men tend to 'transfer' the rage they feel towards dominant society by directing that rage at lower status individuals within their communities and families, namely women and children. Rape, domestic abuse, and harassment of women and children is the result (Kandirikirira, 2002; C. E. Makley, 2002; Poupart, 2003). Some, however, contend this line of argument sidesteps the ways in which communities disregard the needs of victims and avoid bringing perpetrators to justice. Diverting responsibility for male violence from perpetrators to a broader history of colonisation, states Kuokkanen,

"position[s] indigenous men as greater victims of colonization [than indigenous women]." This not only silences the experiences and oppressions of women, it can also have the effect of "[denying] agency and condon[ing] perpetrators' behavior" (2015, p. 273).

Questioning a Focus on Consent and Choice

In her book *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Abu-Lughod decries the condescending nature of Westerners' gaze, in which they assume societies of the global South are inherently worse for women than those of the North. Abu-Lughod argues against a singular focus on whether or not Southern women 'have rights', as this is a view that neither captures nor addresses the complexity of women's lives. She argues that the framework of rights is untenable and without much utility. "It is not easy in people's lives to distinguish freedom and duty, consent and bondage," she states (2013, p. 216). She argues that rather than thinking of freedom and rights as the common entitlement of all human beings, we should ground a concept of human beings' common humanity in the notion that circumstances always have the capacity to make us vulnerable, we are all deeply social beings, and we each have strong emotional needs for connection that tie us to other human beings. She argues that not all individuals value a life of freedom, and states, "Might other desires [besides the desire for freedom] be as meaningful for people? Might living in close families be more valued? Living in a godly way? Living without war?" (2013, p. 45).

Abu-Lughod further argues that choice is itself a flawed concept, since choice inevitably brings with it much uncertainty around the outcomes of our choices. Moreover, she contends our very identity and desires are largely a product of family and circumstance, factors entirely outside of our choosing. Therefore, drawing on the work of Judith Butler, Abu-Lughod argues that the

notion of individual autonomy is a bit of a fantasy, a notion many Westerners hold but a notion which is premised on a conceptualisation of individual possibility that is excessive (Abu-Lhugod, 2013).

As a result, Abu-Lughod calls for understanding, listening, and a focus on the complexity of real lives. In the process, however, she delves into descriptions of Egyptian women's lives, in which she portrays awareness of complexity as anathema to a feminist consciousness. That is, she implies that feminism and nuanced understanding are antithetical to each other, and cannot be combined. Her emphasis on complexity, moreover, leads her to posit choice and freedom as inadequate moral principles by which humans should be treated if they are to be treated with respect and dignity. Her reasoning, moreover, is simply to claim that individuals sometimes make choices that they later regret, or that the constraints of real life often make a truly free choice untenable (Abu-Lhugod, 2013).

Abu-Lughod's argument here is both inadequate and dissatisfying, since her argument misses the point of the freedom principle altogether. A focus on the principle of freedom does not deny that individuals may make choices that, due to ignorance, misfortune, or circumstance, leave them worse off than before. It is rather a principle built upon the notion that extending freedom to individuals is a means by which they may be treated with equal respect. Sen, for example, describes freedom as "people's capability to choose the lives they have reason to value" (Sen, 1999, p. 63). Even in the event that some individuals make choices they later regret, the principle that individuals usually do not have the right to control or coerce others, nor should circumstances remain so constraining that they cause this eventuality, remains a valuable principle (Sen, 1999).

Secondly, Abu-Lughod's argument for a focus on the complexity of individual lives uncovers her fundamental misunderstanding of the values to which many Northern feminists adhere in the first place. Thus, she describes the experience of a woman who faces periodic beatings at the hands of her husband, but who is constrained from divorce because of both the complicated nature of her extended family social ties and economic dependence on her husband. She lists the constraints against divorce that this woman faces as if these constraints prove her argument that Western feminism, or a discourse of rights, is not relevant to this woman. Abu-Lughod further argues that, to end the suffering of this and many other women in similar situations, focusing on opposing patriarchy is inadequate, since major factors trapping these women in difficult situations include transnational economic relations, individual circumstances, and, principally, poverty (Abu-Lhugod, 2013).

Her argument here exposes a serious misunderstanding of the outlook of many Western feminist researchers and activists, as many of these individuals are well aware of the complex nature of domestic violence and the complex constraints facing domestic violence survivors.[46] Such feminists acknowledge and even explain the complex nature of women's lives when they promote feminist values.[47] They are therefore unlike the feminists of Abu-Lughod's imagination, who can only think simplistically. The policy of Refuge, a UK nationwide domestic violence helpline, for example, is to support women victims in *their* wishes and decisions. Callers are not pressured to leave their abusive partners. Rather, women callers are treated as if they are in the best position

[46] (B. Agarwal, 1997; Cane, Terbish, & Bymbasuren, 2014; Kabeer, 1994; Koenig, Ahmed, Hossain, & Khorshed Alam Mozumder, 2003; Michalski, 2004; Stark, 2007)

[47] (for some general examples, see: Friedersdorf, 2013; Ginelle, 2015; Goldstein, 2013; Penny, 2014; Townsend, 2015)

to make decisions about their own lives.[48] In this way, the organisation aims to treat women in a manner that is not condescending, while also remaining aware of the complex nature of women's family circumstances. Only survivors of domestic violence know what is the best course of action within their own situation, including whether or not to stay with their partners.

Finally, and most damningly, Abu-Lughod's 'understanding of complexity' goes so far as to be deeply culturally relativistic, such that she does not decry clear examples of victim-blaming when such blaming is directed at a survivor of domestic violence. As Abu-Lughod states, villagers reacted to the periodic beatings which a woman named Khadija faced at the hands of her husband in the following ways:

> When I would ask [the women of Khadija's village] why [Khadija] didn't leave her husband when he was violent with her, some would explain that she didn't want to end up like her mother, divorced and raising two kids on her own, or that she didn't want her children to grow up as she had, without the love of a father. Others mentioned that she had wanted to marry this particular man, knowing full well his situation and his drinking problem. It was her choice and therefore she had some responsibility to make the marriage work. Some women blamed her for being too touchy and hypersensitive. They contrasted Khadija's flighty mother, who had provoked her ex-husband's violence, to Khadija's father's calm second wife who had managed just fine for eighteen years to get along with her husband. (Abu-Lhugod, 2013, pp. 197–198)

[48] This information was obtained through my personal relationship with the organisation, where I worked as a helpline volunteer for several months.

Some of the women with whom Abu-Lughod conversed include a heavy dose of victim-blaming in their analysis of Khadija's marriage, calling her 'touchy and hypersensitive' and implying she is similar to her mother, who they argue also provoked her husband to be violent. Yet rather than voice any concerns with these victim-blaming attitudes, Abu-Lughod calls the villagers' reactions simply "local ways of understanding the many sorts of difficult situations in which women find themselves" (Abu-Lughod p. 197-198). When an intimate partner violence survivor is characterised as an individual who has 'brought the beatings upon herself,' it seems, AbuLughod feels no need to decry such depictions. In short, Abu-Lughod appears to believe that if we are to understand the complex nature of women's lives, we can do little more than simply accept local responses to women's lives, even when these responses effectively justify abuse. Yet awareness of complexity need not necessitate the abandonment of a feminist consciousness – in fact, there is no necessary or consistent link between the two.

Mani, like Abu-Lughod, also expresses an ambivalence towards singular attention paid to women's choices. She describes how reactions to the practice of *sati* in India have resulted at times in an excessive focus on whether or not the woman in question chose to enter the funeral pyre of her husband, or was coerced into doing so. Solely questioning "whether or not the widow went willingly," states Mani, "…makes it difficult to engage simultaneously women's systematic subordination *and* the ways in which they negotiate oppressive, even determining, social conditions" (1990, p. 37). For Mani, then, a singular focus on agency and consent, absent of a comprehensive account of the oppressive circumstances women face, is inadequate.

However, Mani is a proponent of complex depictions of agency, in which speakers attempt to prevent playing into neo-colonial and racist tropes. We should not, she states, be left with

"reductive representations of women as primarily beings who are passive and acted upon," as this would leave us "with that common figure of Eurocentric feminist discourse: the Third World woman as 'always, already victim'." What is necessary, then, "is the notion of women's oppression as a multifaceted and contradictory social process" (1990, p. 37).

Here, Mani concludes that women's oppression is real, that it exists. Abu-Lughod, on the other hand, appears interested in decrying a singular focus on consent and choice, *without* opposing the broader set of constrained circumstances women face because of their gendered position. AbuLughod appears to believe a consideration of nuance and a feminist consciousness are mutually exclusive, assuming an individual cannot be both feminist and aware of complexity at the same time. Mani, on the other hand, describes the local feminist response to *sati* in India, promoting this type of response herself. This version of feminism is sceptical of enhancing state powers to ban or curb gender-oppressive practices, due to fears that "the state would merely abuse the greater powers that would accrue to it" (1990, p. 35). This feminism also sees any individual practice such as *sati* not as reflective of either tradition or modernity but as one of a host of conditions oppressing women. Such practices, moreover, are seen as historically embedded such that a tradition/modernity divide is often untenable (Mani, 1990). Unlike Abu-Lughod, then, Mani describes and supports one variant of local feminist response to gender-oppressive practices, a variant which is based on a nuanced, in-depth, and historically embedded understanding of women's condition.

Feminism as a Front for Alternative Priorities

In her descriptions of Indian responses to the practice of *sati* both historically and currently, Mani argues that reactions among many Indians and British alike have run along similar lines

both in colonial times and in the present. These reactions, she argues, tend to be couched in a rhetoric of women's empowerment, with feminism used as a front for alternative priorities. "Women," writes Mani, "…provided ground for the development of other agendas" (1990, p. 35; Mani, 1987; Rao, 1999). These alternative agendas included valorising Indian religion, colonial interests in intervening in civil society more generally, or broader societal reform irrespective of women's welfare (Mani, 1990). Similarly, I have found Tibetans active in private initiatives to empower women were more focused upon community-wide concerns than in reducing violence or dismissiveness towards women. 'Empowering women' was in reality a means to promote an alternative agenda (Rajan 2015).

Some scholars argue that for transnational feminist activism to be ethical, it must focus on the role played by Northern governments, Northern multinational corporations, and Northern individuals in the economic marginalisation of Southern women and men. Some of these arguments are convincing, while others risk the effect of erasing gendered concerns from the activist arena, with class and economics considered the only basis of individuals' oppression or subordination. Thus, Stone-Mediatore argues that "the point of cross-border feminist coalitions is not to unite against an abstract patriarchy but to coordinate strategies and resources in confronting the abusive practices of specific transnational institutions" (2009, p. 62). She calls, therefore, for opposition to "labor exploitation by transnational corporations" and buying from a women weavers' collective in Mexico so that workers need not "sell [their products] at desperate prices" (2009, p. 63). In terms of supporting the needs of Afghan women, Stone-Mediatore calls on Northern feminists to advocate for "implementing greater community control of donor aid, holding foreign military forces accountable for violence against civilians, and demanding greater

sensitivity to local authorities on the part of occupying personnel, whose insensitivity has fueled support for the Taliban" (2009, p. 68).

Such issues are disturbing, important, and require an activist response. However, I hesitate to call such movements feminist. The above movements, while important and necessary, can easily lend themselves to a situation in which opposition to poverty or wartime atrocities is based on an analysis of these situations absent of a gendered lens. Issues specific to gender appear set aside for a focus on class and economics alone. Within the above-mentioned actions, for example, domestic violence and rape can easily retreat into the realm of the private, personal, apolitical, and most importantly, forgotten. Feminist activism around the world, spearheaded by both Northern and Southern women in a range of contexts, has worked long and hard to bring issues such as domestic violence out of the private realm and into the public, so that not only laws but also norms and practices by which violence against women remains hidden and forgotten may change.[49] Removing a focus on such matters altogether is surely unwise.

Moreover, numerous historical examples from settings such as the United States (Pleck, 1987), China (Hershatter, 2004), and South Korea (Heo, 2010) reveal a tendency within leftist activist communities to subordinate or dismiss feminist concerns as unimportant or less central than other leftist causes. Other settings also reveal a propensity to reject feminist concerns entirely, even within radical and leftist communities (Seguín, 2015). The argument to focus on transnational economic inequalities, in short, is an argument that risks shifting the focus entirely

[49] (Heo, 2010; Hester, 2005; Maktabi, 2010; Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999; Pleck, 1987; Walker, 1990; Yoshihama, 2002; Lu Zhang, 2009)

to economics while abandoning a gendered analytical lens. This would be a serious loss to the cause indeed.

Not all calls to focus on transnational economic inequalities result in this effect, however. Some argue for working with Southern women to advocate for *both* economic emancipation and women's emancipation. Nagar, for example, as noted above, has worked with a community of Dalit women and men that is active in pushing for the community's economic rights. This activist community emphasises the importance of non-hierarchical relations among all its members, through established practices aimed at ensuring no one voice dominates others within the movement (Nagar, 2013). This is an ethic, therefore, that may allow for the full and equal participation of women. Fonow and Cook likewise speak of combining a focus on issues like pay equity and domestic violence with activism around armed conflict and neoliberal trade agreements (2005; see also Mohanty, 2013). Some additionally argue that struggles against economic and other bases of oppression must be deeply intertwined with "earlier feminist policy concerns" such as "domestic violence, …employment discrimination…and political representation" (Fonow & Cook, 2005, 2226; see also Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Mohanty, for example, pushes for "a materialist analysis that link[s] everyday life and local gendered contexts and ideologies to the larger, transnational political and economic structures and ideologies of capitalism" (2003, p. 504). Thus, some feminist scholars argue for a combination of struggles against economic and gender-based oppressions in a way that does not privilege one form of struggle over the other (Baum, 2004; Mohanty, 2003). Nancy Fraser, for example, believes "male domination cannot be overcome short of abolishing capitalism's deepseated preference for economic production over social reproduction" (Gutting & Fraser 2015; see also Fraser 1995). Lesbian feminists in Latin America likewise argue that "the

commercialization of the human body and sexuality is part of economic globalization and thus…lesbian resistance is fundamental in the struggle against neoliberalism" (Duarte, 2012, p. 170). Some calls to focus on economic inequalities, therefore, are less likely than others to lead to the sidestepping of issues of women's gender-based oppression.

Feminism Intertwined with Problematic Values

In my work on the Tibetan plateau, I have found notions in line with liberal feminist philosophy coupled with gendered beliefs that are at times highly judgemental of women. One Tibetan nun, for example, complains about nuns' lack of opportunities for religious education vis-à-vis monks, and emphasises that women and nuns are capable of doing anything they put their mind to. She aims to enhance both nuns' and lay women's sense of their own efficacy to achieve success in studies and other endeavours. At the same time, however, she supports prevalent stereotypes of women as jealous, closed-minded, and too easily offended (DethongWangmo[བདེ་ཐོང་དབང་མོ], 2011). One Tibetan woman who is widely considered to be a feminist, who has published on women's rights, and who promotes discussion of the daily difficulties faced by women, told me in our interview that some women are beaten a lot by their husbands. If such beatings stop, she told me, the women victims can "go astray", as they are not accustomed to their newfound freedom. She also indicated beatings in Tibetan marriages are likely, but that Tibetan women should bear these beatings rather than marry men of other ethnic groups, as doing the latter shows these women to be short-sighted and closed-minded.[50] Another woman who is also often considered to be a feminist and who has worked with women on empowerment initiatives told me in our interview

[50] She believes Tibetan men are more likely to beat their wives than Han men, an assertion which is itself, of course, suspect.

that Tibetan women's historical low status has resulted from women's own innate inferiority (Rajan 2015).

A More Comprehensive View on Transnational Feminist Ethics

We have seen some of the proposals put forward by Northern scholars and activists and by those operating within activist spaces of the global South. We have also viewed the many pitfalls that may occur in transnational feminist interactions, and have taken a look at the sensitivities and social pressures faced by subaltern women when raising issues of women's rights. Below, I aim to draw upon the works described above, adding to these to arrive at a more comprehensive proposal for how to ethically engage in transnational feminist research and activism. My proposal for ethical transnational work involves five points, each of which is elaborated upon below.

(1) Distancing Oneself from Problematic Values and from Feminism Used as a Cover for Ulterior Motives

As described above, some scholars argue transnational feminist activism can be ethical if local women's movements and priorities are supported, as this prevents the imposition of external priorities. Here, I wish to disagree with these scholars. My disagreement does not rest in any notion that women's own desires and wishes should not be supported. On the contrary, I am fully in support of the view that women's own choices, freedom, and wishes should be supported and heard. However, the scholars making these arguments assume a level of commonality in position and viewpoint that I am not ready to assume. As a result, I am not ready to subscribe to a principle by which I might end up supporting women who may promote further extending

patriarchal values or practices. We have seen, for example, how those who are active in raising awareness of women's rights may also support norms, beliefs, or practices that are deeply oppressive to women at the same time.

As noted above, Mani describes feminists in India who propose a particular vision in response to the practice of *sati*. This vision addresses historical nuance, describes the comprehensive nature of women's oppression, and is careful not to play into the agendas of those who claim feminist values but are not especially focused on women's welfare (1990).[51] In a similar vein, I am willing to engage with and support some elements of the proposals put forward by Tibetan 'women's empowerment activists', but I cannot in good conscience support discourses that are likely to further oppress women. Seemingly feminist priorities, as noted earlier, are sometimes a front for alternative agendas (Mani, 1990; Rajan 2015). It is necessary for feminists, whether working in their own home setting or transnationally, to remain aware of this possibility, and to carefully frame our arguments so that problematic values are not supported.

(2) Discovering Common Viewpoints and Building Upon These

Secondly, I want to adopt the argument of those scholars who emphasise the contested and fluid nature of culture and its norms, who argue that societies always have detractors who oppose prevalent practices or codes of normative behaviour, and who argue that many cultures offer insights that can be used to carry women's rights forward. Here, however, I further develop the arguments of these scholars by contending that, even when values around acceptable treatment of

[51] Sadly, however, Mani describes it is these other groups which dominate the popular discourse in India, rather than feminist thinkers (1990).

women are fundamentally incommensurate, Northern feminists can still build upon commonalities in views to encourage or advocate for feminist outcomes. For example, in my own research of Tibetan survivors of domestic violence, I discovered that in many instances Tibetan survivors did not feel their husbands' beatings were deeply hurtful, traumatic, or problematic. More severe instances of beating, psychological abuse, and material abuse, however, were described as problematic and traumatic by interviewees (Rajan 2016). As a Northern feminist, I can focus on mitigation and prevention of more severe cases, since these are considered abusive and unacceptable by both Tibetan women survivors and myself. The fact that both more and less severe cases are underpinned by norms that men are, under normal circumstances, the heads and disciplinarians of their households, may allow a Northern feminist such as myself to argue for altering men's role within the household. That is, by focusing on those cases which we all can agree are abusive, i.e. the more severe cases, I may still be able to encourage an alteration in men's household role.

In my work, I have identified and interviewed a number of individuals spearheading private initiatives to empower Tibetan women. Most of these individuals, however, did not identify with the term 'feminist'. Some even expressed contempt for those they believed to belong to this category. I could conclude that a feminist consciousness is extremely rare in the parts of the Tibetan plateau where I have conducted my research. A closer look, however, finds the most vivid local forms of feminist consciousness within art, as some Tibetan women authors have created poignant depictions of domestic abuse or women's lack of freedom in their poems (Chime[འཆི་མེད།], 2011; DekyilDroma[བདེ་སྐྱིད་སྒྲོལ་མ།], 2011; Schneider, 2016). A tendency towards artistic depictions could result from the sensitive nature of feminist issues and from fears of social backlash in the event of openly and directly arguing for feminism. Alternatively, those

who portray feminist issues in art may not entirely feel the need to vocally oppose gender-oppressive patterns. These depictions, however, are indicative of potential starting points from which joint transnational dialogue or collective action may be built.

(3) Counteracting Stigma

Thirdly, when advocating for women's rights in underprivileged communities which have been discriminated and marginalised, it is important to counteract the reinforcement of stigmatising labels. In the Tibetan communities with which I am familiar, for example, many individuals are sensitive about the image of their society in a PRC context in which they have been for long characterised as backward and superstitious (Hillman & Henfry, 2006; Postiglione et al., 2004; Yi, 2005). We have seen, moreover, how some feminist theories and feminist spaces have dismissed marginalised women's priorities or have made marginalised women's experiences and voices invisible. We have also seen how women from underprivileged groups may face pressures to refrain from adhering to feminist values, and may be told they are not authentic members of their communities when they advocate for women's rights. These sensitivities can derive from underprivileged groups' power relations with authorities or the colonising power, or from a sense that unity is required to withstand the oppressions faced by the community at large. The transnational researcher or activist should recognise that her dialogue partners may be bracing themselves for condescending and ethnocentric onslaughts, as they may frequently face these dynamics when interacting with outsiders more generally.

An awareness of these difficulties can help the transnational researcher or activist to think carefully about her message and build sensitivity into her communication. Towards this aim, I wish to draw on the work of those scholars who speak about the importance of focusing on

practices within Northern societies that are harmful to women. These scholars point to the value of showing Northern audiences that there is a lot of misogyny in Northern societies and that practices similar to FGC or other Southern practices have been occurring for a long time in Northern settings. My argument is to develop this point further by arguing for the importance of drawing such North-South parallels when working within Southern societies as well. It is necessary, I believe, to present oneself humbly to Southerners, by describing oneself as an individual from a Northern context where misogynistic practices are alive and well. In so doing, the hope is to counteract further stigmatisation of the society in question, both in the minds of Southern audiences as well as Northern ones. Any criticisms or calls for change in Southern practices should be couched within a narrative in which Northern customs are presented as equally harmful. This is one way in which the transnational activist may navigate the sensitivities and pressures faced by the underprivileged or marginalised communities she works with.

(4) Advocacy Absent of Coercion

As noted earlier, feminist research or activism may cause harm, by isolating women with newfound feminist views from their communities, by leading to ineffective or ethnocentric interventions, or by instigating an entrenchment of patriarchal values because community members feel threatened by external pressure. I argue, however, that Northern feminists can ethically encourage a change in local practices, provided that dialogue around differences in values, including advocacy for a change in values, occurs within a context in which value or behavioural change is in no way felt to be tied to provision of scarce material goods or

opportunities. Community members should feel little or no constraint against dismissing and ridiculing proposed novel views. One way to ensure this may be to actively encourage criticism.

Encouraging a move towards more gender-egalitarian attitudes could be enacted while engaging in charity work, such as providing food to the starving, running water to those in need, or scholarships and education to impoverished communities with few opportunities. However, encouraging a change in values within this context would be unethical, as the power inequality engendered by the provision of goods, opportunities, and services may result in a pressurised imposition of values within a context in which value change might alienate an individual from her community. For example, if I were to become involved in financing or providing shelter for Tibetan victims of domestic violence, it would be unethical to use my interactions with shelter clients as an opportunity to propagate a feminist value system in line with my own beliefs. We might additionally raise the issue of perceptions, even if erroneous, that one is tied to a military or colonising power. That is, feminist dialogue or activism should not be undertaken by outsiders if those outsiders are perceived to be capable of providing goods or opportunities via links to a powerful government, military, or colonising regime.

What, one might ask, of a community member outwardly acquiescing with alien views, presenting a façade created for the purpose of acquiring needed resources, a façade which is summarily discarded once it is no longer necessary? This type of imposed deception is itself a form of alienation and silencing, and therefore undesirable. Let us take the example of deception undertaken at times by victims of domestic violence in order to obtain needed services and protection. States Bograd:

> Victims [of domestic violence] may sometimes employ…social stereotypes to buy freedom…Incarcerated, black, battered women are tutored not to mention their children in court to avoid confirming stereotypes of the welfare mother, while incarcerated, white, battered women are taught to weep about their children to capitalize on images of conventional white motherhood. In the service of safety, the conscious manipulation of images fundamentally estranges the battered individual from the truths and integrity of his or her life, a poignant repetition of dynamics often experiences with the batterer. (Bograd 1999, 281)

Deception in which one engages on pain of losing opportunities, services, or goods can be an alienating and marginalising experience. While the above example refers to victims of domestic violence in particular, this type of enforced deception may be an isolating experience for many types of individuals, and should therefore be avoided.

(5) Accepting the Limits of Both Morality and Cross-Cultural Understanding

I seek to adopt Butler's argument that moral values cannot be entirely hard and fast, that a moral code which is genuinely applicable universally is unknowable, that we must accept the possibility of being transformed ourselves through the process of dialogue, and that cultural translation can involve incomplete communication in which each party may never entirely comprehend the concepts of the other (Hutchings, 2013). However, I take Butler's argument further by emphasising this type of dialogue can occur not only in settings where groups take the initiative to come together for discussion, but also within the context of Northerners advocating for a change in Southern practices or values. Indeed, the latter context may be one of the best arenas in which transnational dialogue should take place, because this type of context removes

the problems inherent in Benhabib's argument. We might recall that Benhabib's argument has been criticised because her call for cross-cultural dialogue between individuals who have committed to conversing under principles of universal respect and reciprocity effectively excludes certain types of individuals and certain types of arguments from the dialogue table a priori. Calls for transnational dialogue, moreover, are often naïve because they implicitly assume groups of Northern and Southern women are interested in exploring and discussing the same topics. However, in the case of Northern activists working to encourage a change in Southern values, Southern individuals who were not originally interested in the topic at hand may be drawn into dialogue. This expands the inclusiveness of dialogue, and encourages more diverse voices to take part in discussion.

Conclusion

This article has explored various feminist viewpoints regarding how to ethically engage in transnational feminist research and activism. The problem of ethnocentric bias, usually on the part of Northern analysts or activists viewing societies of the global South in a biased manner, has been described by numerous feminist scholars. To counteract such problems, various methods of transnational feminist practice have been proposed. Subaltern feminist activists have also undertaken particular measures to respond to the marginalisation, sensitivities, and social pressures they face. Here, it is argued that in order to ethically engage in transnational feminist research and activism, the Northern activist should adhere to five principles, namely distancing oneself from problematic values and from feminism used as a cover for ulterior motives, discovering common viewpoints and then building upon these, engaging in advocacy that is fully absent of coercion, counteracting discourses that could further stigmatise underprivileged

communities, and operating in a spirit of acceptance that both oneself and the other will be transformed by transnational dialogue, a dialogue which is itself a matter in which no one party is completely 'right' or 'wrong.'

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ARTICLE 2

Coercive Control, Community Embeddedness, and Family Systems: Interrogating the Relevance of Domestic Violence Theory for the Tibetan Plateau

Hamsa Rajan

ABSTRACT

This paper utilises interviews with women and men on the northeastern edge of the Tibetan plateau to investigate the applicability of Evan Stark's influential theory of domestic violence to the Tibetan setting. In his theory, Stark uses United States data to reconceptualise 'domestic violence' as 'coercive control'. While Stark's argument on the historical emergence of coercive control is flawed, this paper nevertheless argues that coercive control clearly exists in the study setting, revealing the strong cross-cultural applicability of this concept. However, since coercive control is not the only form of domestic abuse in the study region, it is argued that in areas where extended family living arrangements are common and where individuals are deeply embedded in families and communities, a less individualistic lens than is found in both Stark's work and the majority of domestic violence literature is required. Extended families should be conceptualised as 'systems' and as 'social fields'. The family, in this conception, is a systemic whole different from the mere sum of the personalities and inclinations of each family member. The paper elaborates upon how these conceptions can illuminate various dynamics of domestic abuse, illustrating that some cases require a more individualistic lens while others require a more collective lens of analysis.

Introduction

Evan Stark's book *Coercive Control: The Entrapment of Women in Personal Life* (2007) proposes an in-depth description and theory of intimate partner violence in the United States. The book, in which 'coercive control' (CC) is proposed as a more useful term than 'domestic violence,' has had a major impact on government policies, public health services, and academic literature in the U.S. and U.K.[52] While many of the ideas espoused by Stark can be found within

[52] In 2009, the journal *Violence Against Women* published a special issue of essays entirely devoted to discussing Stark's new theory (Brush, 2009), in 2012 the U.K. government adopted the terminology of 'coercive control' to describe this social problem (Ministers for Women and Equalities, 2012), a new law criminalising 'coercive control' in the U.K. came into effect in late 2015 (Bowcott, 2015), and numerous academics as well as the United

the domestic violence literature long before his 2007 book was published (Johnson, 1995; Pence & Paymar, 1993), his book has served to re-conceptualise and solidify these pre-existing ideas, and it has rightly gained much attention.

Using data from interviews conducted in Western China with Tibetan survivors of family violence, this paper argues that the patterns and dynamics of coercive control (CC) have strong cross-cultural applicability, with CC clearly existing in the study region. While Stark's historical argument in which he contends CC is a product of specific historical circumstances found in the United States and Western Europe is critiqued below, the resonance of Stark's contentions in the Tibetan setting shows the strength and reach of his descriptions.

Stark approaches his data in a manner that is perhaps common in legal and medical thinking (Foster, 2009). Within this approach, societies and groups are made up of autonomous individuals, with each person bringing their own aims, personalities, and inclinations to group and interpersonal interactions. Individuals react to each other's actions and words. Sometimes, if a crime or violation is committed, there is a perpetrator and a victim. For Stark, the perpetrator is the agent, the cause of the victim's suffering, the one who is to blame. The victim, on the other hand, has agency and utilises it, but is faced with extremely constrained circumstances, and works courageously within these circumstances to maintain and enlarge arenas of freedom for herself. We have here an individualistic view of the world, and an individualistic understanding of humans' interactions. While Stark's CC is clearly relevant to the study region, many other

States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have used the concept of 'coercive control' to describe and understand the phenomenon in their research and statistics (Anderson, 2008; Hardesty et al., 2015; Jouriles & McDonald, 2015; Lehmann, Simmons, & Pillai, 2012; Villarreal, 2007; Walters, Chen, & Brieding, 2013; Williamson, 2010; Yount, Miedema, Martin, Crandall, & Naved, 2016).

forms of abuse also exist in this setting, and these various types of abuse cannot be explained via a purely individualistic lens.

In many settings or instances, individuals are so deeply embedded in their extended families or communities that they do not always operate entirely as individuals (Firmin, 2015; Kandiyoti, 1988; Moghadam, 2004; Seaton, 2008).[53] They are part of a larger whole, and their actions should not be viewed in isolation from this environment. Their aims and choices are not simply influenced by the opinions of other family members, as an individualistic view of social relations would contend. Rather, their behaviours are part and parcel of the actions and purposes of the family at large, at least some of the time.[54]

As I have written elsewhere (Rajan, 2014), a wide variety of marital arrangements exist in the study region, including various forms of patrilocal, matrilocal, and neolocal marriage. Whether a household is composed of two or more generations living together, or whether instead a more nuclear style of family living exists, in either case the extended family is one social arena in which individuals are deeply embedded, as we shall see. In many cases, all forms of marital arrangement see parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and siblings, or some combination of these individuals, playing a significant role in a married couple's life. Parents in particular are revered, and a prevalent notion is that one's parents deserve care, respect, and deference. It is

[53] Given the contention put forward by some that individuals' sense of identity is largely a product of others' beliefs and perceptions (Baum, 2004; Connolly, 2010), it could be argued that a move away from an individualistic lens is required in the case of *every* social phenomenon. Such an argument is not made here, but it is a point potentially worth considering.

[54] This is not to suggest that the family is the only group within which individuals can be deeply embedded. Rather, depending on setting, individuals may be found to be deeply embedded within peer groups, neighbourhoods, groups of colleagues, tribes, villages, etc. For the purposes of this paper, however, the family will be the focus of attention, as this is most salient for the topic under discussion in this paper.

commonly felt that listening to one's elder siblings or parents is necessary, because of social norms and in order to act in a morally upright manner. As patrilocal marriage is widespread in the region, and as this type of marriage tends to make women most vulnerable to domestic abuse, relative to other marital arrangements (Rajan, 2014), many of the examples below come from patrilocal households.

Viewing families as interacting dynamically with their environment, this article describes ways in which broader community and society norms impact families' choices. In extended family households, for example, patterns of abuse are reinforced by prevalent notions that a daughter-inlaw's duty is to work hard for her husband and his family. She is seen as rightfully under pressure to conform to the expectations and standards of her parents-in-law. The proverb 'don't say a bag is not heavy when you've only just started carrying it; don't say a girl is a good daughter-in-law when she has only just arrived [to your household]' (ལྷུར་ཡོ་འཐུར་འཁྱལ་ཡང་གྱི་མ་ཟེར། མནའ་མ་ཡྱོང་འཁྱལ་བཟང་གི་མ་ཟེར།) encapsulates this view. Another proverb states 'when a woman becomes a daughter-in-law, she not only has to make the crow of that family happy, she has to make the nest happy as well' (ཞེ་མོ་ཞེག་མནའ་མར་གྱུར་ཚེ་དེ་བ་ཚང་གི་ཁྭ་ཏ་དགའ་རུ་འཇུག་དགོས་པ་མ་ཟད་ཚང་ཡང་དགའ་རུ་འཇུག་དགོས།). The meaning here is that she must not only make her husband happy, but must make his parents and siblings happy as well. At times these norms reinforced patterns of abuse perpetrated by family members concertedly.

This paper contends that in the study setting, we should not define abuse primarily by the tactics and aims of individual perpetrators, as Stark does, but by the entire set of circumstances faced by a woman. Drawing on systems theory as it has been applied to the family and on Bourdieu's

concept of 'social fields', it is argued that individuals conceptualised as autonomous agents should not be the sole focus of our analysis or attention. Rather, we should conceive of the group or extended family as if it operates as a systemic whole. Just as looking through a microscope at individual water molecules would not allow the observer to see that the molecules have together created a whirlpool, we need to step back from an individual lens, thereby broadening our focus so that we can see the workings of the systemic whole.[55]

The 'system' or 'whole' in this case is the extended family. In this paper, I define the extended family or household system as composed of those family members living together in the same home. Relatives, friends, and acquaintances not living with a family form the broader community with which a family interacts. Depending on one's subject of study, however, the systemic whole in question could be a peer group or another type of close-knit community.[56] This paper argues for an application of this systemic lens to the household so as to arrive at a better understanding of domestic abuse.

It is necessary to recognise, however, that a systems lens or the notion of social fields is more salient to some cases of domestic abuse, while a more individualistic lens is more appropriate to others. This paper does not, therefore, argue for the complete abandonment of individualistic conceptions. Rather, the contention of this paper is that a range of possibilities exist, such that

[55] This example derives from a conversation I had with Karl Segnoe, who himself drew upon the scientific discussions of Jay Griffiths in her book *A Sideways Look at Time* (Griffiths, 2004).

[56] In fact, close-knit communities are not the only form of grouping which may operate in a systemic way. Scholars have raised the prospect of similar properties within larger groups, such as nations. Some, for example, have spoken of 'mass consciousness' or 'national character,' or have noted systemic properties of individuals' actions when interacting on the internet (Inkeles, 1997; Nelson & Bancel, 2011; Postmes, Spears, Sakhel, & de Groot, 2001).

some cases of abuse display more individualistic patterns while others display more collective ones.

Ultimately, it is necessary to recognise that a purely individualistic lens is not the only option available to the analyst, and that this lens is not always appropriate to all cases of family abuse. This paper explores various examples from the study setting to illustrate this point. Applying more communal lenses to the family has not, to my knowledge, been previously undertaken in domestic violence literature and research.

Study 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. Participant observation in Tibetan families and peer groups was also conducted to understand prevalent gender norms and roles. Sampling of interviewees was purposive, seeking to obtain a wide range of age, education, and residence criteria. Out of a total of 100 individuals interviewed, 56 transcripts were analysed in depth for the current paper. These transcripts were chosen for their usefulness in exploring common practices with relevance to household gender roles and household conflict, or because they provided in-depth descriptions of cases of abuse and violence.

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, I did not have the option of targeting my interviews to users of domestic violence services. I therefore could not identify individuals as survivors or perpetrators prior to interview. Instead, I interviewed individuals in the general population. These included interviews with victims, perpetrators, and those with no personal experience of abuse. However, many of those with no personal experience told stories of close friends and relatives who had experienced abuse.

Stark's Theory of Coercive Control

Liberty Restrictions and Extra-Household Control

Firstly, let us understand what Evan Stark argues in his book *Coercive Control.* Stark argues CC is a more appropriate label than 'domestic violence,' as it more accurately reflects abusive men's tactics and behaviour. These tactics, states Stark, are similar to those undertaken by perpetrators of capture crimes such as kidnapping or the internment of prisoners of war. "Like hostages, victims of coercive control are frequently deprived of money, food, access to communication or transportation, and other survival resources even as they are cut off from family, friends, and other supports," he states (2007, p. 5). Abusers have allowed partners the use of only a tiny amount of money with which to feed themselves and their children, have restricted partners' mobility and forbidden entry into extra-household associations, have confined partners to the use of a single toilet in the house without availability of toilet paper, have raped and beaten partners, and have threatened partners with violence. In the case of one survivor, "she had been a virtual prisoner on [her and her husband's] Greenwich estate, where she was forbidden to work,

confined during most of the day to a bedroom suite, and denied any help or contact with family or friends" (2007, p. 268).

Not all victims are forbidden from working or leaving their houses, however. Often, when victims work or attend school, perpetrators extend a sense of surveillance, regulation, and threat to these extra-household sites. States Stark, "Men in my practice…show up unexpectedly [at partners' workplaces] during the day, call to check in at numerous times, call other employees to verify their partner's whereabouts, or take positions at the same or a nearby place of business" (2007, p. 270). Perpetrators also monitor victims' activities by checking mobile phone and internet use; checking wallets, bags, and belongings; and stalking. When victims make decisions for themselves or attempt to maintain arenas of freedom, moreover, this is often seen as a sign of disloyalty or a cause for punishment.

Perpetrators additionally establish numerous rules around partners' daily activities. These rules are often aimed at regulating "everyday behaviors associated with stereotypic female roles, such as how women dress, cook, clean, socialize, care for their children, or perform sexually" (2007, p. 5). In one case, for example, a perpetrator forced his partner to vacuum-clean such that the lines were always visible on the carpet, and placed his partner under regulation to ensure the bed covers hung exactly one and three-eighths inches above the floor. Women's pervasive assignment to the culturally devalued sphere of domestic service is therefore a primary site upon which perpetrators focus their regulation, as is their appearance and sexual service to their partners.

As Stark further describes, victims often have the sense that perpetrators' excessive anger and violence are possible at any moment and unpredictable, regardless of what the victim says or

does. Physical violence, however, is not always necessary to instill fear and obedience. Excessive anger or veiled threats, as well as the memory of past violence, are often sufficient to suppress victims' open resistance. Additionally, violence need not be severe to create the worst harms. Rather, the worst harms are caused by the level of control over a victim's daily activities, often enacted through frequent but low-grade violence, threats, surveillance, and the obstruction of opportunities. Finally, even after separation or divorce, victims frequently suffer perpetrators' physical assaults. For many women, therefore, separating from a partner is a tactical and highrisk move that may or may not successfully remove her from the sphere of his surveillance and control (Stark, 2007).

A Historical Trajectory from Violence to Coercive Control

In a lengthy historical analysis, Stark argues that in the United States and Great Britain domestic violence was once characterised by beating of wives, but later became "wife torture," or severe and frequent physical violence directed at wives, "during the transition from industrial to modern corporate society." Finally, domestic violence transformed once again to become the CC that is seen today (2007, p. 171).

In recent decades, restrictions against women's voting, participation in the labour market, and divorce have been dismantled, marking a multitude of "attainments in education, culture, [and] legal rights" (Stark, 2009, p. 1513). As a result, Stark argues, women have obtained a large measure of freedom from their historical dependence and subordination to husbands and fathers, and have also enjoyed a relaxation of social controls. Women's gains have resulted in a society in which women's behaviour, opportunities, and mobility are no longer controlled and restricted by society and by wider institutions. These gains, contends Stark, have led to a transformation in

the type of abuse women suffer. Physical violence was once the preferred tactic of intimate partner abuse, whereas now, abusive men engage in violence in addition to liberty restrictions, threats and surveillance. As Stark explains:

> [V]iolence is usually sufficient to subordinate women in personal life in societies and among groups where they have limited economic opportunities for independence outside the home, lack political voice, and/or are constrained to dependence in heterosexual partnerships by some combination of law, custom, and religion. In the United States, these conditions prevail among certain immigrant and religious minorities. If women's speech, dress, relationships, and behavior in civil society are controlled externally, these behaviors require only limited management 'at home.' By contrast, coercive control has become the oppressive strategy of choice in countries such as the United States and in groups where women's equality and independence have eliminated these external controls or rendered them largely ineffective. (Stark, 2009, p. 1513)

In the above, Stark asserts that the gains of the women's liberation movement effectively gave rise to CC. He further indicates this historical argument is not only relevant to the American past, but marks a division between more and less traditional societies in current times as well.

Nonetheless, Stark does not believe women have gained full equality to men in U.S. society. Instead, he argues some improvements in women's status have occurred, while tenacious inequalities remain. These remaining inequalities only support the continued existence of CC. Stark argues that abusive men focus on restricting the freedoms women do have, provided by lax regulation in the wider society, while simultaneously utilising the persisting inequalities women still face to aid them in their enactment of abuse. CC, argues Stark, "is accomplished by

exploiting the benefits women derive from their newfound equality – taking the money they earn, for instance," while "the disadvantages they suffer because of persistent sexual discrimination in the market and their consignment to default domestic roles" further supports men's abuse (2007, p. 5). The improvements that have occurred in women's rights are in no way universal, but these partial improvements have been followed by an increasing perniciousness in the type and style of domestic abuse many women suffer.

The Status of Women in the Study Region

A brief summary of the freedoms and restrictions faced by women in the study region can help us compare the study area to the U.S. Women in the study setting and throughout China enjoy the right to become educated and to work in professional occupations or businesses if they so choose. Many informants of the current study noted that, at present, girls are sent to school by parents much more often than they were just twenty or thirty years ago. Jobs in government and businesses are therefore available to women, with quotas even instituted in some areas to ensure women occupy relatively high government positions. At times, however, hiring is heavily influenced by practices of bribery and nepotism. Analysts of China have also noted the presence of clear and open gender discrimination in hiring (Guang & Kong, 2010; Hershatter, 2004; Leung, 2003). As informants of the current study further noted, concerns around women's family responsibilities, and even around rumours of extramarital affairs in the event that women work closely with male colleagues, can impact perceptions of women's fitness for professional life. Moreover, according to one interviewee of the current study, women who engage in seasonal labour, such as construction work, are routinely paid less per day of work than their male counterparts.

The above suggests rough similarities to the United States, where Stark and other analysts have pointed to women's rights to education and professional work, but where gender disparities in pay and discrimination in hiring remain relatively intractable (Lips, 2013; Milkman, Akinola, & Chugh, 2015; Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012; Stark, 2007). However, Stark also points to a relaxation of social mores in the U.S., such that in addition to the dissipation of women's legal and financial dependence upon husbands and fathers, women no longer face wider social norms encouraging their confinement to the home or subordination to family men. In the study setting, on the other hand, prevalent norms commonly support men's leadership and authority within the home. The type of cultural shift Stark has seen in the U.S., therefore, does not appear to have fully occurred in the study region.

We might also point to questions of property inheritance and ownership, as these are additional arenas in which U.S. women were once constrained (Rosen, 2003; Shammas, 1994). Studies in China have found that while women formally bear rights on par with their brothers to inherit property, these rights have not always been upheld in practice (Hershatter, 2004; van der Ploeg, Ye, & Pan, 2014). As one village leader explained to me, Tibetan women legally have the right to vote in village-wide elections but very rarely carry this out in practice. Gayley likewise reports religious vows of vegetarianism are often taken by Tibetan 'heads of household' in lieu of their entire families (Gayley, 2013). In the study sites, decision-making in extra-household arenas is usually a heavily male-dominant affair.

Coercive Control and the Reification of Culture

In the study sites, it appears we can see some similarities to the U.S. context, while some arenas of social life may be considered more restrictive than the setting Stark describes. However, the

factors listed above are not all-encompassing, and additional factors affecting the gendered social status of individuals are sure to exist. Stark's distinction between more and less 'traditional' societies, while compelling, is ultimately too simplistic. Social norms and practices are constantly evolving, much difference of opinion exists within any social grouping, while the particular circumstances of women in various class brackets, communities, and households are likely to show differing opportunities and constraints. Dividing societies by how much freedom they give to women, therefore, is not as straightforward as Stark implies.[57] Moreover, different arenas of social life may display contradictory trends with regards to the degree of restriction or freedom extended to women. One society may fare worse than another in terms of women's educational attainment, for example, but may display greater participation of women in community-level decision-making bodies. A third society may show relatively low rates of women's educational attainment and political participation, but may fare better in its portrayals of women in popular songs and stories, leading perhaps to more confidence and outspokenness among women in the third society than in the first and second societies. In short, to categorise one community as worse or better for women than another, and as more or less restrictive of women's everyday freedoms "by [a] combination of law, custom, and religion," as Stark states (2009, p. 1513), is no clear-cut exercise, and difficult to undertake in practice.

Coercive Control in the Study Data

While we might take issue with Stark's historical contentions, his descriptions of abusive intimate partner dynamics are not only accurate for the U.S. setting, but reveal strong cross-

[57] Simplistic tradition vs. modernity dichotomies, by which groups are categorised and conceptually separated from each other, have been critiqued by many (Cornwall, 2012; Lauer, 2006; Mani, 1990).

cultural applicability in the Tibetan setting as well. CC was clearly seen in the cases of several of the women I interviewed, in a pattern almost identical to Stark's descriptions. One woman, for example, faced frequent and severe beatings at the hands of her husband, who also raped her several times. Her husband ridiculed her, took her salary, and gave her barely any money. On top of all this, he put her in a situation in which she did not have enough food to eat. He regulated the amount of time she was allowed to spend at the market and beat her for placing a bowl on the table too hard or for accidentally bumping into the table. He also prevented her from seeing the doctor when ill and did not allow her to give birth in hospital.

In another case, a woman suffered frequent and severe beating at the hands of her husband, in addition to emotional abuse which she found deeply hurtful. Her husband repeatedly interrogated her regarding the content of her phone conversations. He did not let her attend celebrations or gatherings, and, as long as she was accompanied by her husband, she was too afraid to chat with acquaintances whom she passed on the street. Her husband followed her and covertly listened to her conversations with friends when she went to meet them. He controlled family decisions, took her salary, and forbade her from doing the work she loved, as this work made her well known in the community.

One woman, describing her former relationship with her ex-husband, said that her husband found fault with her for no reason. He also swore at her and at times beat the door down, hit her with household objects, stomped on her face, and even threatened her with a knife. She was forced to do all the housework, and her husband got angry if she spent too much time clearing away the dishes after eating. As this woman explained:

> He hit me many times…He beat and scolded me, and [if he told me to,] I had to wake up [at 4:00 in the morning when he came home after a night of drinking] to cook for him. I had no choice…He makes me wake up so I wake up, he lets me sleep so I sleep, I do whatever he tells me to – that's what would make him satisfied.

The cases above show patterns of control, micro-regulation, surveillance, and victims kept in constant fear. They are cases in line with Stark's descriptions of CC, and can be appropriately analysed via the individual lens Stark provides. They are also cases very similar to Stark's because the perpetrator is the male intimate partner and the victim his wife or girlfriend. In many cases within the study setting, however, wider extended family dynamics were centrally implicated in the abuse a woman suffered. As noted earlier, an individualistic lens should not be the only option on offer when analysing cases of domestic violence. Rather, a range of possibilities, from highly individualistic at one end to highly collective on the other, should be among the choices the analyst adopts, depending on the case in question.

Before we look closer at examples from the study region, let us explore a couple of theoretical lenses which can allow us to broaden the focus of attention from Stark's individual perpetrator to the entire extended family and all the interactions within it. Two works in particular are relied upon to build a more collective lens on the study data. These are Carlene Firmin's study of youth gangs in the U.K., and Steinglass et al.'s study of the 'Alcoholic Family'.

Collective or Group-Based Theoretical Approaches

Social Fields and Habitus

In her work on gang-associated youth sexual violence in the UK, Carlene Firmin describes a context in which hard and fast conceptual divides between victim and perpetrator are untenable, and in which notions of agency normally underpinning models of criminal perpetration serve to obscure rather than reveal realities on the ground. As Firmin describes, young women associated with gangs are often victims of sexual violence, frequently assaulted in instances of multiple-perpetrator rape in which they are attacked by male peers within their own gangs or by men and boys of rival gangs. Although ideas of victim and perpetrator frequently rest on the assumption "that when boys are committing harm, they cannot simultaneously be victims" (2013b, p. 49), within the gang-associated context such notions are erroneous, as understanding perpetrators' actions in isolation of their social environment places too much singular blame and agency onto individuals. As Firmin explains, it is "unhelpful and unrealistic" to take account of abusive relationships "without considering the power imbalances that exist between young people and the social fields they are navigating" (2013b, pp. 46–47).

Firmin argues the individual is likely to act very differently if he or she is removed from the toxic gang-associated social environment in which he or she is embedded. This is because, within this context, violence can be utilised as a survival tactic. For boys and young men, this can involve a "'survivalist masculinity'" in which violence and assaults are undertaken "to survive as 'male' in gang contexts." Firmin cites a gang-associated young woman she interviewed, who stated the following:

> It's not like [the boys are] sat with a gun telling them 'you must do this' but if you're a member of a gang you've got to do it. They're not going to say 'no' cos you're going to be the pussy of the gang, and because you're involved with that environment, you think

> fuck it and just do it…I don't think it'll be so much them being forced, but I think, what's the word where you're pressured? (Firmin, 2015, p. 59)

Moreover, young people who are likely to commit sexual offences in groups are often unlikely to engage in the same offences individually, as these acts are more about boys' group compliance and bonding than about individual desire (Firmin, 2016).

Gang-associated women also learn to facilitate sexual violence against other young women as a measure of partial protection for themselves when faced with the social and physical dangers of the gang context. As Firmin explains:

> [W]omen and girls talked about 'setting up' to be sexually assaulted girls who were associated to rival gangs or who had offended one of their peers, by befriending them and then taking them to places where they would be assaulted…[T]hey also described drawing young women into sexual exploitation within street gangs, to divert attention away from themselves and towards a new victim. Such girls had either already been sexually exploited themselves or had witnessed sexual violence within the street gang, and were therefore attempting to present themselves as a potential perpetrator rather than a potential victim. Some young women described facilitating attacks by holding girls down while they were assaulted or filming attacks on their mobile phones. They asserted that the more involved they became in perpetrating and enabling sexual violence, the less likely it was that they themselves would be victimised. (Firmin, 2013a, pp. 110–111)

Sadly, however, such self-protection measures were not always effective. Those young women who proactively assaulted others, took on a masculine appearance and comportment, or engaged

in criminal offences as a means of gaining status within the gang could not entirely escape their status as women, and therefore their vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Thus, as Firmin explains, some of the women who undertook the above measures "were consistently victimised by their male peers when other women and girls were not available. In addition, if they entered into a relationship with one of their male peers, [their aggressive behaviours] failed to conceal their 'femininity', and they reported being opened up for exploitation within the group" (Firmin, 2013a, p. 112).

Girls' initial involvement with gangs occurs for a number of reasons. For some, those who did not agree to sex would be assaulted, "so sex [was] exchanged for safety." This then led to relationships in which "the girls gradually began offending alongside the boys who were assaulting them" (Firmin, 2013b, pp. 40–41). Other motivating factors for gang association include loyalty to a brother, uncle, or partner who is already a gang member, or fear of threat or retribution if certain activities, such as operating as a look-out or hiding weapons in one's home, are not undertaken (2013a).

A focus on the social pressures encountered by boys and girls does not eliminate the fact that gang-associated young men often internalise a sense of male privilege, license to abuse women, and feelings that violence is justified if women do not respect them 'as men' (Firmin, 2014). Moreover, at least partial internalisation of the notion that one can and should undertake predatory activities appears necessary, for both girls and boys, if attempts at survival in this context are to be somewhat successful. However, the pressures of the social environment are heavily, even primarily, to blame for the tragedy of sexual violence that is seen repeatedly in this

context. Young people associated with gangs should be understood as "*both* exploited and exploiters" (2013a, p. 49).

Firmin turns to Bourdieu and to feminist interpretations of Bourdieu's work to understand the cases she studies, relying particularly on the concepts of 'habitus' and 'social field.' The social field is a social realm such as a peer group, school, or organisation in which rules of behaviour have been constructed. Habitus is a term describing the internalisation of these rules by social actors, and refers to "an internalized system of acquired dispositions that continues to develop over time" (Steinmetz, 2008, p. 591). Individuals learn the 'rules of the game' in the various social fields they inhabit, and tend to operate within these rules so as to gain status and social capital. Firmin argues this conceptualisation does not obliterate agency, but represents, rather, an interplay between individuals' agency and social structure. For Firmin, while change is possible, opportunities for change are conditioned by the particularities of the field in question. As she states, "[s]hould analysis identify fields which open up alternative choices for young people the potential to act differently will be created. Whereas, if all fields upon which young people are dependent promote ideals or behaviours that underpin peer-on-peer abuse the potential for different outcomes is limited" (Firmin, 2015, pp. 57–58).

The Family Systems Approach

In *The Alcoholic Family*, Steinglass et al. draw on their experience as researchers and family therapists to argue that individuals' alcohol abuse can profoundly impact those individuals'

families, to the point that alcoholism becomes a central organising principle of family life.[58] Taking a 'systems approach' to the study of families, the authors explain their view that the family is composed of separate parts (or individual family members) which come together to produce a whole, the shape of which cannot be predicted from knowledge of each individual part alone. "Just as we cannot predict the characteristics of a chemical compound from the properties of the separate elements that combine to form it, we cannot predict the behavioral properties of a family simply through a knowledge of the separate personalities of the husband, wife, and children," state the authors. Moreover, "no single element…within a system can be thought of as acting independently…The behavior of family members, when they are in the context of their family, is shaped and constrained by the simultaneous behaviors of all other members of the family, singly and in combination" (Steinglass, Bennett, Wolin, & Reiss, 1987, p. 45). This is similar to the concept of 'emergence' found in complexity theory and systems theory, which posits the whole is not exactly greater than its constitutive parts, but different from them. As examples of this concept, we can look to the fact that "many cells together constitute a living organism…[or] that several different species in the same habitat constitute an ecological system" (Walby, 2003, p. 10). If families are understood as systems, then, the collective operations of the family taken as a whole cannot be ignored in favour of a singular focus on individual proclivities. The only way to understand the broader group dynamic, and the logic upon which this dynamic operates, is to step away from conceptions of self-directed individuals, and instead broaden our focus to the enmeshed and collective patterns of the group in its entirety.

[58] Steinglass et al.'s work focuses on alcoholism regardless of whether or not it is accompanied by domestic abuse. The work is relevant for our purposes here not because it comments on domestic abuse in any way but because it applies systems theory to families.

By applying systems theory to the family, Steinglass et al. reveal the unconscious ways in which family members may mimic each other. Individuals may act in a particular way within their family, but would not necessarily act this way elsewhere. The individual is in effect caught up in an environment that causes certain actions, tendencies, and behaviours to take hold.

In one case, for example, Steinglass et al. interview a set of family members together, first when the alcoholic father of the family is sober, and later when he has been allowed to drink. The father's ongoing alcoholism compelled him to attend a rehabilitation clinic numerous times, and his addiction caused countless problems for his family. During the first, sober interview, all family members appeared rigid, unanimated, depressed, and defeated. Family members rarely made eye contact with each other, and a spirit of dejectedness appeared to hang over them as they discussed the impact of the father's alcoholism on their lives. During the second interview, prior to which the father had been allowed to drink, "the family seemed suddenly to have awakened. Everyone seemed attentive, ready for interaction, eager to do combat" (Steinglass et al., 1987, p. 150). Family members were not only more engaged and combative with each other, they were also more affectionate. Once alcohol was introduced into their environment, family members expressed more emotion, engaged with each other more directly, and, surprisingly, lost some of the air of depression and defeat that had previously characterised their collective mood.

Patterns by which families displayed a distinctive 'behaviour while intoxicated' were found by the authors repeatedly, within research projects employing diverse methodologies and in the authors' therapeutic interactions with patients. The contents of a family's 'behaviour while intoxicated' differed from household to household, but the pattern seen across cases was one in which a repeated and predictable dynamic arose in the presence of intoxication, even when only

one or a few family members were alcoholics. Thus, Steinglass et al. describe cases in which only the father of the family is an alcoholic, only the mother is an alcoholic, both the mother and father are alcoholic, and one or both parents as well as several of the children are alcoholic. However, the family's repetitive and predictable patterns of behaviour in the presence of intoxication was a systemic family property, involving all family members.

As the authors describe, not all households with alcoholic members become 'Alcoholic Families,' or families in which alcoholism fundamentally alters a family's everyday functioning. Often, myriad unconscious daily decisions on the part of various family members help to accommodate and incorporate the alcoholic individual's proclivities into the wider family structure. The cumulative effect of these decisions is that alcoholism becomes an essential factor around which family life revolves. The very nature of family strategies to solve problems, including problems unrelated to alcohol, is altered, while members' general patterns of interaction with each other undergo a transformation as well.

Steinglass et al. note that alcohol use can be functional for families, facilitating family problemsolving and stability. It is reasonable to conclude, then, that sudden cessation of alcohol use may be experienced by families as disruptive and difficult. Moreover, alcoholism's chronicity is likely underscored by the functional properties it serves for the family at large. As with Firmin's findings above, we see that a problem, whether sexual violence or alcoholism, cannot always be understood as a matter of individual pathology alone. Rather, due to the systemic properties of the problem, collective behavioural dynamics are fundamental to comprehension of the issue at hand. Moreover, these dynamics are not the same as the mere sum of individual family members' personalities and inclinations. The unit must be observed in its

entirety, and group dynamics should be understood as a matter of individuals enmeshed with each other. The unit also takes on a life of its own, one that cannot be predicted by merely combining knowledge of the personalities of each family member.

A More Collective Lens on Domestic Abuse in the Study Region

Let us now turn to an examination of cases from the northeastern Tibetan plateau, looking at cases expressive of the systemic nature of families and at cases in which a social fields lens helps illuminate comprehension.

Identification with Natal Families and Exclusionary Dismissiveness of Daughters-in-Law

The intensely collective nature of families can be seen in various cases showing household interactions coalescing to form a 'family culture' which generated abuse. In these cases, family members exhibited a general sense of superiority vis-à-vis the new household member – the patrilocal daughter-in-law. Their sense of superiority could be detected in the ways in which family members tended to band together in exclusionary dismissiveness, even emotional and economic abuse, of this new member.

This pattern is reinforced by a fundamental self-identification with natal families in the study region. Individuals tended to view themselves and others as so fundamentally intertwined with their natal families that their skills and moral qualities as persons could not be clearly separated from their parents' qualities or those of their family as a whole. As a result, several women found husbands' or in-laws' words to be deeply hurtful or abusive when these words included criticism of the women's natal family members as poor or full of bad people. Such criticism, it

seems, could not be clearly distinguished from criticism of the women themselves. While it is likely that a patrilocal daughter-in-law is eventually seen as a full member of her husband's family, especially once she has been in her husband's household for many years and is the mother of the household's children, this does not prevent abuse on the basis of assertions that her natal family is poor or bad.

In a number of severely abusive cases, in fact, friends and family of victims, as well as women victims themselves, felt the abuse had occurred because the women's families were less wealthy and composed of members who were less politically or financially powerful than their husbands' families. Perpetrators and victims in these instances appeared to approach each other not as individuals but as units belonging to their wider natal families.

In one case, a woman's sisters-in-law and mother-in-law were upset that she liked to read at night and that she did not cook for her husband's family in the mornings, as she did not eat breakfast herself. Her sisters-in-law complained about the clothes she wore and her appearance, told her she looks like a fool, that the way she eats is not nice, and that her hands and feet are too large. At first, her husband argued with his sisters when they attacked his wife in this way, but he later began supporting them. In this case, the woman's in-laws felt dissatisfied because of the wife's perceived lack of adherence to wider norms by which a daughter-in-law's purpose is to constantly serve and work towards the benefit of her husband's family. Spending time reading or not cooking breakfast for her in-laws each morning run counter to these norms. At the same time, the sisters-in-law's interest in bullying her was facilitated by other family members' general dislike of her. While the family members in this case did not exactly mimic each other, they operated as a unit in a way that collectively led to emotional abuse.

In one case, concerns that a woman could *potentially* engage in an extramarital affair led to a disciplinary regime imposed concertedly by the entire family. This woman's case was described to me by her daughter, who told me her mother was beautiful. As a result of her beauty, her mother-in-law, sisters-in-law, and husband believed she would easily get into an extramarital affair. Consequently, her mother-in-law did not allow her to wear nice clothes, and her husband beat her for going out. As the interviewee explained, "[My father's] two sisters would tell their brother that my mother talked to someone today or talked to some man yesterday. Then my father would immediately beat her." In this case, a woman was restricted and controlled by her entire husband's family, as the family members wanted to force her to behave in a way they felt was proper for a daughter-in-law.

This case bears some of the hallmarks of CC, though the perpetrator of abuse is not a single individual. In this case, then, a systemic view of families should be combined with an understanding of CC dynamics, as described by Stark, to properly comprehend the situation.

In one case, a nomad woman was emotionally abused by her mother-in-law while also being placed under an extreme burden of labour in her husband's household. As her husband did not undertake any of the household labour, she was compelled to herd the family's sheep and yaks alone. Sometimes her parents-in-law went to the nearby town, leaving her to manage the simultaneous responsibility of herding the animals and caring for the family's adopted toddler entirely on her own. She said the work was at times so difficult she felt like dying. In addition to this, her husband's family members made her feel guilty for eating food, leaving her under-fed and constantly hungry. The extreme burden of labour she was under led other villagers to feel bad for her. Some told her she will die if she continues to work this hard, and advised her

against staying in her husband's family. Meanwhile, her mother-in-law prevented her from visiting her natal family, made her feel afraid to receive visits from her natal family, criticised her when villagers befriended and helped her, and kept her anxious and afraid that she would be kicked out of her husband's household, a prospect which she feared would lead to stigma and poor material and social prospects for herself in future. All the while, her husband simply left home often and did not pay any attention to her.

In this case, the woman's mother-in-law was the primary abuser. The husband's negligence of his own labour responsibilities was a contextual factor supporting the overall situation, while the woman's grandfather-in-law attempted to help her with her heavy burden of labour at times and also supported her emotionally. In this case, the mother-in-law drew on wider social norms and her own sense of responsibility as a woman to her household to pressure her daughter-in-law to work harder, adding denial of food and emotional abuse into the mix. With regards to the husband, wider gender norms that deride only women, but not men, when they do not work extremely assiduously led the husband's parents to allow their son the freedom to neglect his household labour responsibilities. This was reinforced by a broader society which also would not deride him for his actions. This woman's abuse, therefore, was in part the product of the wider 'social field'. As Firmin describes, the social world within which individuals reside operates upon particular 'rules of the game' promoting a specific set of ideals and behaviours (2015).

This case, like the other cases mentioned above, shows family members' interactions, reinforced by broader social norms, combining to create a profound exclusion and dismissiveness that

effectively led to abuse. Outcomes were the product of the entire family culture, or the operations of the family as a systemic whole.

In one case, a mother constantly and excessively criticised her daughter-in-law's performance of labour, relaying these criticisms to her son as well. She also complained to her son that her daughter-in-law was not careful in her conduct with men, therefore attracting men's attentions. The mother-in-law also indicated to her son that a real man knows how to control his wife and should beat her, even telling him that 'a beaten wife is like dough that is kneaded well' (打出来的媳妇，揉出来的面). According to the daughter of this couple, the husband and wife were very affectionate with each other, but when the husband got drunk, he would hurl the same accusations at his wife that her mother-in-law routinely hurled at her, and when the wife attempted to defend herself, he would beat her. In this case, the mother-in-law appears to have had particular ideas about how a daughter-in-law should be treated, how she should behave, and how her behaviour should be regulated. Although the husband did not appear to have particularly agreed with his mother's accusations, he still succumbed to his mother's pressure to beat and be dominant over his wife, and he therefore beat her when drunk.

We might point to the facilitating influence of alcohol in this case, perhaps required because the husband felt torn between loyalty to his wife and loyalty to his mother. He may have needed to get drunk before he could muster the courage to beat his wife. His mother's power to influence him is likely to have been reinforced by two factors – that she was emphasising norms of masculinity found within the wider society and that she was his parent and elder, thereby deserving of his respect and obedience, within locally prevalent conceptions.

This mother-in-law also drew from some of the norms in the wider society around her when she held that daughters-in-law should be oppressed and placed in a subservient position, and appears to have felt her actions to be absolutely acceptable, without question. After years of abuse, the daughter-in-law in this case decided to get a divorce, at which point her husband prevented a divorce by promising her they would live separately from the mother-in-law. Once the family moved away from the mother-in-law, she began to complain, scream, and cry when her son and his wife visited, stating they had neglected her and left her alone, and that her daughter-in-law had manipulated her son to make him abandon her. While the frequency of beatings appears to have reduced after this move away from the mother-in-law, the beatings still continued long afterwards, suggesting a certain 'path dependence' (Walby, 2003) had already occurred. That is, a certain inertia to group interactions may be seen, such that behaviours are internalised in each person's 'habitus,' and once internalised, thereafter difficult to dislodge.

Collective Family Desires Taking Precedence Over Individual Wishes

Decision-making is often a family-wide affair, and cannot always be seen as a matter of choices taken by singular individuals. The wider family, for example, is often integral in decisions to divorce. In one case, a woman was busy in her career as a teacher, and could not, as a result, often aid her husband's family in the farm work. While she did her best to undertake farm work during her holidays, she also could not afford to provide her husband's family with much of her salary. Her husband's family members were upset that she neither benefitted the family by providing labour power on the farm nor by providing money. Their opinion eventually affected the husband's own opinion, and he subsequently initiated a divorce. This decision was not

undertaken entirely by him, however, as the decision was clearly the product in part of his parents' and siblings' desires.

In one case, a woman's parents-in-law and sister-in-law believed the members of their own family were good-looking, while their family's daughter-in-law was not beautiful enough. As the woman told me, "[My husband's] parents and elder sister said even if they have a daughter-in-law who's not good at the [household] labour, it's fine, and most importantly the daughter-in-law should be beautiful." Eventually, the in-laws' feelings towards this woman led to a divorce. The woman's parents supported the divorce, as they felt her in-laws had mistreated her. Upon the couple's divorce, however, both husband and wife appeared regretful that they had no choice but to part ways. "When we divorced, I felt really bad when I thought of my daughter. And since I knew my husband since I was young, I was attached to him and felt sad," the woman said. Moreover, upon their divorce, when her husband brought back her things to her natal home, he was crying and spoke to her in a sorrowful tone. In this case, we see the power of the extended family, within which individuals are deeply embedded. The extended family members effectively instigated a divorce, despite a lack of real interest in divorce on the part of the husband and wife.

As we have seen in numerous cases, then, individuals cannot always be seen as operating autonomously or in separation from their family units. Further evidence in support of this contention lies in the fact that, in a pattern directly counter to that which Stark observes, in the vast majority of cases I came across, abusers did not terrorise victims after separation or divorce. While post-separation attacks by abusive ex-partners are described by many analysts of the U.S. and U.K. contexts (Dillon, Hussain, Loxton, & Rahman, 2013; Hardesty et al., 2015; Logan &

Walker, 2004), in the study region, an absence of post-separation intimidation derives from individuals' embeddedness within their extended families. When a couple divorces and a woman or man returns to his or her natal family, the separation and divorce settlement is often a product of both families' negotiation. A man would be unwise to stalk or harass his ex-wife while she is living with her parents, brothers, and possibly other relatives. Moreover, as his own family is likely to have been heavily involved in the divorce negotiations, they are unlikely to hope for a reconciliation any longer. As an individual deeply embedded within his family context, the man is also unlikely to pine for reconciliation, or for control and ownership of his ex-wife, any longer. Once again, by looking too myopically at individuals' actions, we will miss the way the family system operates as an agentic unit in and of itself.

Cases Veering Towards More Individualistic Patterns

In some cases, family relationships displayed a level of complexity and contradiction that revealed diverse individual proclivities. At times these cases required more individualistic than collective analyses.

One case displayed patterns by which various family members each operated on a seemingly separate logic. In this case, a patrilocally married woman – let us call her Droma – faced emotional abuse at the hands of her sister-in-law as well as physical and emotional abuse at the hands of her husband. Let us call her sister-in-law Yangjen Tso. Droma's story was told to me by her daughter, who analysed the reasons behind the abuse her mother faced as follows. Yangjen Tso controlled the household finances in collaboration with Droma's father-in-law, as the father-in-law doted upon his daughter Yangjen Tso. Yangjen Tso feared losing her considerable power within the family, and feared this could result from Droma's husband,

Yangjen Tso's brother, taking a more assertive stance as to his own rights, as a man, over the family finances, rights which he generally gave up in deference to his father. Yangjen Tso feared that if her brother and his wife Droma got along well, Droma might convince him to assert more of his rights to control and manage the family finances. This would cause a decline in Yangjen Tso's power, something she enjoyed only because of her close relations with her father.

To prevent a loss of power, Yangjen Tso looked for opportunities to instigate or enhance conflict between her brother and his wife, so as to keep the couple from getting too close to each other. Yangjen Tso also used economic and emotional abuse against Droma, aiming to keep her sisterin-law controlled and subservient. Droma was left without sufficient clothes, shoes, or even time for herself, as Yangjen Tso did not help Droma with any of the household labour. As Droma's daughter further explained:

> [I]f…my mother's relatives come to visit her, then [my aunt Yangjen Tso] always try to like hurt my mom…'Oh…she knows nothing'…really mean. And…if there is a conflict…between my parents…she always…goes out and keeps…telling others like there was a conflict like this, and it's all my mom's fault or something like that. She wouldn't tell others the truth.

Here, one facet of the emotional abuse Droma suffered involved Yangjen Tso's spreading of negative rumours about Droma within the wider community. Moreover, the complicated dynamics of extended family relations led Yangjen Tso to feel she benefitted from belittling and demeaning Droma.

This case showed similarities to patterns found in other cases as well, in which mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law spread rumours about the patrilocal bride of their family, accusing her of instigating family conflicts or of treating her parents-in-law with disrespect. Blaming bad behaviour on a family's daughter-in-law can have the effect of harnessing community opinion as a weapon against the victim. Spreading rumours in the community can therefore be one facet of a broader pattern of emotional abuse.

The case above, of Droma and her husband's family, grows even more complex when we look into the relationship between Droma and her husband. At the start of their marriage, Droma's husband hit her occasionally. Several years later, he got into a relationship with an extramarital lover, and wished to divorce Droma so as to marry his lover. However, Droma did not want to divorce, and Droma's father-in-law supported her, telling his son that if he really wishes to divorce, he can do so of his own accord, but will be kicked out of the household as a result. Consequently, Droma's husband began beating her much more severely and frequently than before, in an attempt to compel her to initiate the divorce he desired. Were Droma to initiate the divorce, he would not need to be expelled from the family.

In cases such as that of Droma and Yangjen Tso above, a focus on individuals' particular and autonomous wishes and desires can elucidate much of the relevant dynamics involved. In other cases as well, such as when a husband supports and defends his wife against emotional abuse by an in-law, or when a daughter refuses to re-marry after a divorce despite her parents' wishes[59], the observer can separate distinct individuals' tactics or aims and analyse the situation that

[59] It should be noted that it is by no means always the case that parents encourage or support the perpetuation of abuse. Parents often pressure their son to cease his aggression towards his wife, or intervene to stop beating when it occurs.

results. Although it is reasonable to analytically view Yangjen Tso's or Droma's husband's aims as singular and separate from the actions of others, however, there still exists a family environment that is operating in a concerted fashion. In this case, the fact that Droma was left without proper shoes or even time to comb her hair in the mornings was not only Yangjen Tso's doing. It resulted also from Droma's father-in-law's decisions regarding the use of family finances and from an internalisation by all parties that it is acceptable for a daughter-in-law to be excessively burdened with household work.

This case, like many others, reveals only some family members acting in an abusive manner. In this and other cases, some family members abused the daughter-in-law while others provided emotional or logistical support to the victim. However, we cannot point to this divergence in individual behaviours alone as reason to deny the utility of a systemic view of families.

At times, particular aspects of cases require more emphasis on the autonomous aims of individuals, while at other times more communal lenses are required. Most importantly, individualism *alone* should not be the only lens chosen by the analyst in *every* case. That is, researchers should not conceive of an individualistic approach as the only possible option.

Family Systems and the Broader Environment

Scholars drawing on Bourdieu's concept of social field and on systems theory have separated family from community, considering these two spheres as dynamically interacting with each other. Allard, for example, advocates for viewing individuals as differently positioned within the social fields of family and community. "[I]ndividuals are differently located in social fields relating to family, friends, school and community and…these intersect to product social capital

that is valued in some fields and devalued in others," she states (2005, p. 69). Walby explains that the notion of 'system' in complexity theory involves the idea that many systems exist simultaneously, without necessarily forming any kind of hierarchy. Instead, the environment of any one system is the sum total of all other systems it is surrounded by. As Walby states, "In order to respond to its environment a system changes internally. Since its environment is composed of other systems, these other systems also change internally" (2003, p. 8). If the family is viewed as a system, the broader society and community environment would impact the family, while the system of the family would respond, interact, and adapt to its environment.

The study data, moreover, shows that patterns of abuse in families are heavily influenced by wider community norms, as we have seen in many of the examples above. Added to this is the fact that community opinion can encourage men to assert dominance over their wives. According to one informant, if a man cannot slap his wife when she speaks harshly to him, others consider him to be incompetent. As one male interviewee explained, "I have been married for eleven years. I have never punched my wife. Besides you, I wouldn't say this to anyone. If I were to tell others I haven't ever punched my wife, others might say I'm a really weak man." One woman even stated, "[In the recent past,] when a group of men got together, one man among them would slander another, saying 'you can't even beat your wife. I beat my wife," and they would end up arguing." In one case, a woman did not confront her husband about his extramarital affairs, because she felt confronting him would reduce his reputation as a man in the eyes of others. In some of the study sites, then, a man who is too 'meek' or afraid to beat his wife, or whose wife is assertive enough to confront and accuse him, is considered contemptible.

Concerns that a family will acquire a bad reputation in the event of divorce also impacted families' choices. In one case, a woman was abused by both her husband and her sister-in-law for many years before she finally decided to divorce. At this point, her husband's family members went to great lengths to negotiate with both the woman and her natal family, attempting to prevent the divorce for the sake of the family's reputation. Likewise, an anonymous online Tibetan-language post describes the author's relative, who faced repeated beatings at the hands of her husband. According to the author, this woman's natal family pressured her to stay in her marriage, out of concerns for their own reputation (སྙུག་བཅུད་ལེན།[Nyukchulen], 2012). Various interviewees similarly spoke of themselves or their female relatives warned by natal family members that they must make their marriage work and must persevere despite any conflicts that might arise in their husband's home.

Understanding the family as forming its own social rules while interacting with the wider community and social environment allows us to explain differences between households. In the case of one household, for example, the patrilocal daughter-in-law accompanied her mother-inlaw to the fields each day to undertake farm work. Her husband was usually busy herding the family's livestock or travelling to the nearest town to purchase items needed by the family. Husband, wife, and both parents-in-law shared responsibilities with regards to caring for the couple's young child. When the husband's older brother visited, he sometimes scolded his brother for not working harder at his household duties. Sometimes the husband's parents did the same. The daughter-in-law, on the other hand, was generally given more kindness and leeway by her parents-in-law. Once, when she was returning home after a day's work in the fields with her mother-in-law, a fellow villager told the daughter-in-law she was shameless, because she allowed her mother-in-law to labour alongside her, even though her mother-in-law was elderly.

Meanwhile, another onlooker felt the daughter-in-law did not undertake her duties adequately, as she did not know how to milk the family's cow, even several years after marrying into her husband's family. Her mother-in-law did the daily milking, without complaint, explaining to me that she did so because her daughter-in-law was unable. In this case, although broader community norms insisted that daughters-in-law should live up to high standards of labour competence, this woman's personal family circumstances protected her from the full extent of pressure created by these norms.

Such examples support the notion that particular 'rules of the game' are formed within the family system. Families interact with and adapt to the surrounding social environment in a dynamic and ongoing manner.[60]

Discussion

Stark's concept of CC is a worthwhile perspective for understanding abuse in the United States. This article reveals the strong cross-cultural applicability of Stark's descriptions, as cases of CC are clearly found on the northeastern Tibetan plateau. This article also highlights the fact that CC, especially CC conceptualised as perpetrated by an individual male intimate partner, is only one of many forms of abuse in the study setting. Many additional form of abuse are not adequately represented by Stark's focus on the aims and tactics of individual perpetrators, as such a focus is often too narrow. Compared to Stark's U.S. clients, individuals in the study setting appear to identify with extended families in a more fundamental way, and appear more

[60] I do not intend to claim the community is a bounded system of its own, or to define which systems exist in the environment surrounding families. The community may indeed be a system of its own, but an exploration of this question is beyond the scope of this paper.

pervasively embedded in their families and communities as well. In this setting, therefore, a broadening of the analytical lens from the individual perpetrator to the extended family and community is called for.

This article argues for a combination of three lenses to sufficiently comprehend the various forms of domestic abuse that can occur in regions like the Tibetan plateau, where extended family living arrangements and strong identification with families and communities are prevalent. Different levels of emphasis should be placed on each of these three lenses, as required by the details of each case. These three lenses are Stark's description of CC dynamics, the notion of families as systems, and Bourdieu's concept of social fields.

Steinglass et al. view families as systems, such that family members become unwittingly pulled in to the proclivities, characteristics, and behaviours that are prevalent around them, when they are in the family setting. Family members do not always act in identical or similar ways, within a systems view of abusive families, but collectively co-create an environment which generates abuse of a daughter-in-law. The family has been defined here as composed of all relatives living together under the same roof. Due to extended family living arrangements, those living together often include parents-in-law and siblings of the husband or wife.

Just as the systemic family should be viewed as having its own tendencies, above and beyond the tendencies of each family member, Firmin speaks of a 'social field' as an entire community or institutional context, and as an arena encompassing every actor belonging to this context. This sum total of a particular social context should be seen, in some cases, as akin to an actor itself. Outcomes are created as individuals become caught up in the wider spirit or environment constructed by all the field's or system's members collectively. The construction of this wider

environment, moreover, can be unconscious or non-deliberate on the part of any one individual member.

To reiterate, then, abuse in the cases described above often involved a toxic mix that could only be formed by the various extended family members coming together to create a particular systemic whole. That is, we cannot identify perpetrators, whether they be husbands or in-laws, then look to their aims and tactics in isolation of this whole group dynamic.

Moreover, the systemic family is itself impacted by the broader social environment around it, as systems and complexity theory contend (Walby, 2003). The family forms its own social field, complete with its own social rules, and these are impacted by wider community norms. As Firmin notes, this is not in any way to obliterate all agency among individuals. Rather, the final outcome is co-constructed by all involved parties.

What we are given by Stark's individualism on the one hand and Firmin's context of highly constrained choices on the other is a range of emphases, from more to less individualistic, to choose from. In some cases, a group dynamic, the workings of the entire group, are the primary factors giving rise to crime or violation, whereas in other cases an individual perpetrator, or several perpetrators' autonomous actions, may more accurately be the focus of our attention. This paper has attempted to emphasise that the individualistic end of the spectrum is by no means the only option in research on domestic abuse, and that a systemic approach to families should be added to current approaches.

Ultimately, in contexts in which community embeddedness runs deeper than it may run in many areas of the U.S., a broadening of the lens to one encompassing the entire extended family, and

the community within which that extended family resides, may be necessary. Such a lens is not common in domestic violence literature, and at times the concept of CC is uncritically adopted and utilised in regions of the world very different from the United States. This is unwise, and is likely to obscure much salient information, or may even lead the analyst to make erroneous conclusions. As domestic violence researchers, we must understand the contexts within which we operate. Not all of these will be contexts of relatively autonomous nuclear family households composed of individuals without a pervasive sense of embeddedness in extended families or close-knit communities.

Conclusion

While Stark's contention regarding the historical emergence of CC is suspect, his descriptions of abusive intimate partner dynamics show strong cross-cultural applicability to the Tibetan context. Stark's theory views individuals as autonomous actors, a view which is appropriate to some cases. This paper argues, however, that in many cases conceiving of families as systems or as social fields is necessary, as an individualistic lens alone is too narrow. While a complete abandonment of individualistic theories or views of the family is not encouraged here, the analyst must recognise that a range of possibilities exist, such that some cases of abuse display more individualistic patterns while others display more collective ones.

Cases of abuse in the study region showed patterns by which family members banded together in exclusionary dismissiveness directed at a daughter-in-law. This was reinforced by broader community norms encouraging women's hard work and submissiveness towards husbands and in-laws. In some cases, husbands beat wives because of pressure from their mothers or because they supported their mothers when mothers conflicted with daughters-in-law. In addition, a

strong self-identification with natal families, the wider family's integral role in decisions around divorce, and the way that broader community norms affect family culture support both a systemic view of families and the application of a social fields lens to domestic abuse.

While the context of UK youth gangs may seem, at first glance, too dissimilar to families on the Tibetan plateau to be of relevance in an analysis of the study region, Firmin's work is in fact highly useful for our purposes here. First, for the gang-associated young people Firmin describes, the social group of the gang is more central and powerful a force in their lives than the young people's families. As the primary or most fundamental social grouping in which young people are intertwined, the gang context is similar to Tibetan families. Secondly, and more importantly, Firmin's work is utilised here as an illustration of extreme communalism. Her descriptions form a counterpoint to the strong individualism of Stark. As such, Firmin's and Stark's work can be seen as two opposite ends of a spectrum. I believe an illustration of both ends of this spectrum is required to fully comprehend the range of possibilities which can open up to the analyst if she moves beyond purely individualistic understandings. To reiterate, then, Firmin's work is particularly useful here as an illustration of the extent to which communal and structural factors may constrain individual choices, and as a suggestion of the types of characteristics which may be found in contexts of extreme communalism. Many of the Tibetan examples described above lay in between these two poles, i.e. between the extremely individualistic cases Stark describes and the extremely communal cases Firmin describes. However, combining the Tibetan data described above with the analytical lenses provided by both Firmin and Stark allows us to more easily step back from individualistic understandings and contemplate a broader range of possibilities.

In his seminal work on suicide, Durkheim argues that our social desires are liable to become excessive, if not contained by social norms and mores. He implies strong social ties are entirely positive in nature, as too much distance from others and from embeddedness in a community leads inevitably to disappointment and suffering. For Durkheim, strong social ties impose important moral and religious limitations on individuals' desires for prestige, wealth, and power. Without such limitations, unbridled greed and desire are the inevitable result (Morrison, 2006). While this paper is not a study of the causes or consequences of suicide, it is a study of the social factors behind an equally important problem, namely family abuse. Yet the evidence described here paints a picture of the social that is in no way as fundamentally positive as Durkheim's.

Strong social ties do not prevent abuse from occurring. Rather, strong social ties are in some cases the *cause* of the problem, particularly when family relationships are fundamentally pathalogical or troubled in nature. Thus, in opposition to Durkheim, I contend that we cannot discover the source of the problem by investigating the extent of relational distance between social actors. Rather, when dealing with questions of the family, in which interpersonal bonds are often strong and lasting, the most crucial point of analysis is the *nature* of communal ties. The power of the social to regulate human behaviour, which Durkheim lauds, is in some cases a power to create, encourage, and sustain abuse. When the family system forms a pathalogical unit that is abusive, social regulation becomes oppressive. Effective avenues out of abuse, in these cases, are likely to require that the victim leaves the family in question, thereby distancing her social ties to other family members, or that the family system is confronted with a catalyst which sparks a decisive change in the basic logic upon which family members' interactions are built.

Finally, it is worth noting that the conceptualisation of domestic abuse proposed here may make some readers uncomfortable, as it may seem difficult to blame perpetrators if social fields are one of the most important factors giving rise to abuse, or if perpetrators are seen as not always likely to undertake the same behaviours outside of particular family settings. However, if outcomes are often co-constructed by several parties at once, then surely it is incumbent upon researchers and analysts to understand this point if successful solutions are ever to be found. Questions of blame and punishment are issues that, for the moment, I choose to leave to philosophers and ethicists.

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The impact of household form and marital residence on the economic dimensions of women's vulnerability to domestic violence. The case of Tibetan Communities

1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a serious public health problem affecting women's health and well-being. Globally, the World Health Organization (2013) estimates approximately 1 in 3 women have suffered either intimate partner violence (IPV) or sexual violence at the hands of a non-partner. IPV has been recognized by governments around the world, the United Nations, women's advocacy groups, and public health and social welfare organizations as a major social problem causing serious harms to women, their children, and their families. In a number of countries societal and official responses to IPV have undergone a transformation, such that what was once deemed a taken-for-granted part of life that did not warrant intervention from outsiders is now viewed as a social problem requiring the extension of support and protection to victims (Pleck, 1987; Walker, 1990; Muehlenhard and Kimes, 1999; Yoshihama, 2002; Zhang, 2009; Heo, 2010).

Theories of IPV have varied and evolved over time, and factors such as genetic predisposition to aggression; antisocial and deviant personalities of perpetrators; social learning stemming in part from witnessing violence; or aggression as a reaction to couple distress have been proposed as the causative mechanisms behind IPV (Michalski, 2004; Saudino and Hines, 2007; Gordon, 2008). However, many of these theories can lead the analyst to sidestep or minimise a crucial factor in domestic violence (DV) – its gendered nature in heterosexual partnerships, consisting primarily of female victims and male perpetrators (Cascardi and Vivian, 1995; Swan and Snow, 2002; Dobash

and Dobash, 2008; Freeman, 2008; LanghinrichsenRohling, 2010), as well as gendered structural and normative barriers that increase the likelihood of victimisation.

Feminist theories argue that the underlying mechanism driving IPV is perpetrators' motive to obtain power and control over their female partners, a motive that is supported by broader notions of normative male dominance that exist within society. IPV has been characterized as a pattern of behaviours in which the abuser uses not only physical violence but a broad range of tactics to enact fear in his partner, and to obtain power and control over her (Stark, 2007; Humphreys and Campbell, 2010). IPV has been described as similar in nature to capture crimes such as kidnapping, the taking of hostages, or the internment of prisoners of war (Stark, 2007).

In a number of settings, to understand IPV as simply a matter of the dynamic between two intimate partners is woefully narrow in scope. Studies conducted in Jordan (Clark et al., 2010), India (Rew et al., 2013), and among South Asians in the United States (Raj et al., 2006) reveal in-law abuse to be at least as significant a problem as abuse from intimate partners.

In extended family living arrangements, in-laws become another group of potential abusers, in addition to intimate partners. In areas where living with extended family is the norm, the question of whether a woman lives with her own parents after marriage or with her husband and in-laws is crucial. The available literature suggests patrilocal marriage, in which a woman marries into her husband's family, can increase vulnerability to DV by isolating a woman from networks of support located in her natal village and home. By contrast, matrilocal marriage, in which men marry into women's families, should offer some protection to women, as women live in familiar territory, among their childhood support networks, and are in a position of greater respect and bargaining power than the status often accorded to brides in patrilocal arrangements (Hyde, 1999; Michalski, 2004). As Michalski's (2004) review indicates, however, the protection offered by matrilocal

marriage is likely to be mediated by the willingness of a woman's parents and relatives to intervene in DV.

Researchers working in South Asia have supported bargaining models of the household, which argue that if a woman's extra-household resources and options would allow her to live independently from the household unit, her bargaining power within the household is relatively strong. That is, a woman's options to exit a marriage and the strength of a woman's extra-household options, termed her 'fall-back position', can affect the extent to which other household members will acknowledge and defer to her needs, opinions, and interests. Moreover, a woman's capacity to speak up against arrangements she deems against her interests is affected by both this fall-back position as well as norms around when and from whom assertiveness is deemed acceptable. Agarwal (1997), for example, notes that mothers-in-law and daughters are often in a better position of bargaining power within South Asian households than are daughters-in-law, in part because of norms allowing older women and daughters to be more assertive than daughters-in-law. Finally, the perceived importance of a woman's resource and labour contributions to the household affects her bargaining power, while cultural notions around the normative rights and obligations of household members affects the control and allocation of resources within the household (Kabeer, 1994; Agarwal, 1997).

Theorists have argued that when women are economically dependent on male partners, they are at higher risk for DV, because of a lack of ability to leave the relationship or gain redress. A number of studies suggest financial dependence on men or lack of control over household resources is a risk factor for IPV. Some argue men with financially dependent wives are more likely to engage in abusive behaviours because they know their partners' financial dependence prevents separation (Michalski, 2004; Villarreal, 2007; Choi and Ting, 2008; Wright and Benson, 2010). As Yount and

Li (2009) point out, financial dependence may compel women to view IPV with tolerance, and even to justify IPV when it occurs.

However, while a number of studies reveal that a financial position or educational achievement lower than one's husband is a risk factor for IPV, many studies also reveal the opposite – that when women have significantly higher education than their husbands, earn an income, or earn an income when their husbands are unemployed, they are at higher risk of IPV (Koenig et al., 2003; Choi and Ting, 2008; Yount and Li, 2010; Mogford, 2011; Fisher, 2013). Choi and Ting (2008) therefore propose an "imbalance theory of spousal violence," within which women's economic dependence on men makes them vulnerable to DV, while on the other hand when women are earning and achieving more than their male partners, men respond to their sense of emasculation by becoming violent or abusive. Choi and Ting propose the same pattern holds for imbalances in household decision-making power between men and their female partners as well. It is argued men compensate for decreased income, achievement, or household decision-making power relative to female partners by becoming abusive. The reason men try to compensate in this way is that they feel a loss of self-esteem when their sense of acceptable masculine dominance relative to their wives is lost. Researchers working in several non-Western settings have likewise argued that in cases where women are undertaking traditionally male gender roles or refusing to enter into relationships with men in such a way as to reinforce men's sense of their own masculine dominance, men use violence both to reverse a sense of emasculation and to punish women for transgressing normative gender roles (Kandirikirira, 2002; Choi and Ting, 2008). Under the imbalance theory, the primary arena of analysis is relative income and power differences between two partners. Within this theory, when women are equal to their partners in income, education, and household decision-making power, they are at relatively low risk for IPV.

Women's dependence on partners need not be only financial in nature, and financial barriers need not be the only barriers to divorce and separation. Legal norms, social services, and community and societal sanction can all affect women's vulnerability to DV, through affecting the pressures upon women to stay within abusive marriages and the opportunities available to them to exit these partnerships or obtain redress and support (Yount and Li, 2009). In her description of the case of African refugees living in Australia, for example, Fisher (2013) notes the refugees were surprised to find they were living in a setting in which IPV was taken seriously and was treated as a matter warranting external intervention by social services. As a result of their changed circumstances, many women reacted to IPV with less tolerance of it. States Fisher, "There was a sense that women were becoming stronger, felt more able to speak up about the violence in their lives, and seek support for it because they know that violence is unacceptable, that it will be taken seriously and there are options for them" (p. 843).

In some developing country settings, material resources are often obtained via one's position in social and political networks, and through one's social and family-based connections (Kabeer, 1994). Since marriage and ties to a husband can bring crucial social status and social resources to women, women may be tied to and dependent on marriage for both social and financial reasons (Kabeer, 1994; Yount and Li, 2009). In some settings marriage and association with a husband and his household are not so much a choice as a virtual requirement, supported by "normative pressures backed up by the threat of social sanctions" (Kabeer, 1994, p. 109).

Finally, it must be noted that fear of gender-based violence outside the home may contribute to women's sense of a lack of an exit option from heterosexual partnerships. Explains Stark (2007), there is "a pervasive sense that women are vulnerable to male violence in any public setting...This fear leads many women to look to heterosexual relationships for protection and to exaggerate the

dangers of living on their own" (p. 249). Fear of gender-based violence at the hands of men who are not intimate partners could, then, contribute to a situation in which women tolerate or remain in abusive relationships.

Interactions between household form, marital arrangements, and DV is an under-researched phenomenon. This article looks at the case of the north- eastern edge of the Tibetan plateau and shows that in a setting in which economic production is often primarily land-based, women's access to the prized and valuable asset of land is essential to their options. Women's material and familial circumstances offer more or less constrained exit options in the event of marital breakdown or abuse. Tibetan communities of the study area present a fascinating case study because these communities display a wide variation in marital arrangements and in practices of household monetary and decision-making control. All of this variation, however, occurs within a cultural context in which the most patriarchal arrangements are considered to be ideal and most normative, and in which men are considered to be both naturally and normatively stronger and more powerful than women.

Drawing on interviews and participant observation conducted in a number of villages and towns on the northeastern edge of the Tibetan plateau, this article argues that typical matrilocal arrangements offer the best DV protection while typical patrilocal arrangements put women in a position of greatest vulnerability. However, various sites of vulnerability exist in all marital forms, including a third arrangement, here termed marrying 'in the middle.' These additional sites of vulnerability include cultural constraints, such as the perceived necessity for remarriage following divorce and post-divorce child custody practices that can place children in particularly difficult circumstances. Patriarchal and inegalitarian gender norms that affect individuals' assessment of each other and of the various household forms has the potential to affect women's vulnerability in

all marital arrangements, as we shall see. This study reveals several cases of DV that are largely in line with the imbalance theory. Corresponding with theories of household bargaining power, this study additionally confirms the importance of women's fall-back position, that is, women's options for exiting the marital and household unit.

2. METHODS

This article 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. The research looked at DV dynamics within Tibetan households, and involved in-depth, unstructured interviews with seventy-six women and twenty-four men. Interviewees were purposively sampled for a range of age and education levels as well as for both rural and urban residence. As organizations providing services to Tibetan victims of DV were nonexistent or difficult to access in the study sites, this research employed interviews with women and men in the general population. Therefore, it was impossible to identify interviewees as victims or perpetrators of IPV prior to interview. Thus, not all interviewees were victims or perpetrators of DV, but a significant minority of interviewees were. For ethical reasons, research activities did not focus on one particular village or township. Rather, numerous villages, nomadic settlements, and towns were visited, and a small number of women or men interviewed in each site.

While in-depth, unstructured interviews were the core of this research, this project is also informed by the author's many years of personal experience and interaction with the study region, as well as by participant observation. Two periods of participant observation, one in a farming village and one in a nomadic settlement, were built into the research, in order to gain an understanding of gender divisions of labour within households and day-to-day household activities

and relations. In addition to this, the fifteen months of fieldwork included numerous shorter stays with Tibetan families in Tibetan towns, villages, and nomadic settlements. An endless number of valuable conversations between the author and Tibetan friends and acquaintances, recorded in the author's fieldwork journal, have also informed the author's understanding of Tibetan women's social status, household gender roles, and DV in this region. Tibetan language articles and books on women's status or women's history have further informed the author's understanding and analysis of the data presented here.

Stringent ethical precautions were undertaken during the course of this research, in order to protect the women interviewed. These precautions were adapted and expanded from the World Health Organization's ethical guide- lines on researching violence against women, which stipulate that only one woman in each household should be interviewed, an interviewee's community of residence should not be informed the survey is looking into violence, and researchers should refrain from researching men in the same groups from which female respondents are drawn (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005). Ethical clearance for this project was provided by the ethics review board of the University of Oxford.

This article is based on a reading of a subset of the interview data gathered. Information from forty-five interviews with women, and seven inter- views with men was drawn upon for this article, in addition to field notes regarding all of the participant observation interactions, including periods of stay in a number of farming villages and nomadic settlements, and also including numerous conversations conducted with Tibetans occupying a range of positions in society. A previous research project conducted by the author in 2009, in which nine health workers and non-governmental organization staff members residing in the study area were interviewed regarding

their work with Tibetan women's health, Tibetan women's empowerment, or DV, has also been drawn upon for supplementary information.

3. HOUSEHOLD ORGANIZATION ON THE NORTHEASTERN EDGE OF THE TIBETAN PLATEAU AND EXTENDED FAMILY CO-LIVING

Traditionally, Tibetans in the study region maintain their livelihood either by farming or by living in nomadic settlements and engaging in animal husbandry. Many villages are also farming-cum-nomadic (རོང་མ་འབྲོག) in which case families engage in a combination of farming and animal husbandry. Households in the study region are typically extended family households, as it is considered incumbent upon the younger generation to live with and care for the older generation. It is usually only one child who will take up the task of living with and caring for his or her parents throughout their old age. This leaves additional sib- lings to set up separate residences for themselves and their partners and children when they get married.

In the study area, marital arrangements tend to be either patrilocal or matrilocal in nature. A third form of marriage is marrying 'in the middle' (བར་འདུག). Patrilocal marriages are considered to be the most common and normative, as revealed by common Tibetan sayings and traditions. For example, one Tibetan proverb states, 'A woman's place is in her husband's home, and a monk's place is in the monastery' (བུ་མོ་འཁོ་ས་གནས། ཞ་ཆུ་འཁོ་ས་དགོན།). That patrilocal marriage is the primary form of marriage is also attested to by the Tibetan tradition of wedding songs which comfort brides who are feeling sad on their wedding day, on account of the fact that they are leaving their family and parents behind (Thalo Thar [རྟ་ལོ་ཐར།] 2011). This theme has been taken up by famous singers in Tibetan language pop songs as well (Dronbe [སྒྲོན་བེ།]).

Matrilocal marriages appear most likely to occur when a couple has no sons, or if they have a son who for some reason cannot marry and live with his parents. In this case, in order to ensure that parents with no sons have a child to live with them and care for them in their old age, the couple will keep their daughter at home, and a groom is brought into the daughter's household. In this way, a family's land is passed on to the younger generation, and parents are cared for by their own children in comfortable and familiar surroundings. Alternatively, even when parents have a son, they may prefer matrilocal marriages if they wish to keep both their sons and daughters at home.

In patrilocal marriage, the *naamaa* (གནམ་མ་) or patrilocally-married bride, becomes part of her husband's household and family. Likewise, in matrilocal marriage, the makpa (མག་པ་) or matrilocally-married husband, becomes part of his wife's household.[61] Marrying 'in the middle', however, means that neither does the groom become a part of the bride's household nor does the bride become a part of the groom's household. Rather the couple's household and family is considered separate, not completely belonging to or forming a part of either the groom's or bride's family. Couples married 'in the middle' are likely to live in a manner similar to a nuclear family, in their own residence separate from both the husband's parents and the wife's parents.

The type of marital arrangement is very much an economic arrangement because, traditionally, it is about maintaining land and property within a family. Land is traditionally the primary unit of economic production, as it is the resource most required for growing crops and for herding animals and allowing them to graze.

[61] The term makpa is also at times used more generally to mean 'husband', without reference to the type of marriage which the man in question has entered into.

For clarity, let us note that when a couple lives separately from either the wife's or husband's parents and additional relatives, this is by no means necessarily indicative of an 'in the middle' marriage. Often couples live away from their parents either because their work brings them to a town or city, away from their natal village or nomadic settlement, or because their parents are already living with and cared for by a sibling. When a couple lives apart from the elder generation, however, the couple's marriage is often still designated as patrilocal or matrilocal in nature. If such a patrilocal or matrilocal arrangement is negotiated by the bride's and groom's families, the repercussions are such that the extended family in question is considered to ultimately own the couple's property and any children that are produced by the marriage. In the case of a patrilocal marriage, then, the couple's property and children are considered to belong to the husband's extended family. Moreover, the primary responsibility for elder care resides with the household to which the couple belongs. Thus, if a woman lives in a nuclear arrangement but has married into her husband's family as a *naamaa*, she and her husband are primarily responsible to care for his parents, as opposed to hers. Finally, in the case that a marriage is patrilocal or matrilocal in nature but the couple lives separately from the elder generation, the groom's parents or bride's parents, respectively, may have provided the couple with the land or house or furniture, etc. which they use to set up their separate residence upon marriage.

Please note that within this article, when I refer to 'matrilocal' or 'patrilocal' marriages, I am generally referring to those arrangements in which couples co-reside with the elder generation. Thus I will use these terms with reference to their most typical connotation. The case of couples living in more nuclear-type arrangements is also addressed below.

Let us look in greater detail at the three main marital arrangements found in the study area.

3.1. Patrilocal Marriage

Interviews and participant observation revealed that when a woman marries patrilocally, especially at the beginning of her marriage, she is expected to work hard and prove herself. One of the main reasons she has been brought into her husband's household is for her labour power, and so she is expected to slowly take over from her mother-in-law, to become the primary labourer of women's tasks, so that her mother-in-law will be allowed to rest in her old age. Often, the pressure on a woman to work very hard is much reduced in her own parents' home, where she has grown up and lives prior to marriage. In her own parents' home, she appears to have a higher status and is more of a valued and cherished family member than an individual brought into the household for a practical purpose. For example, the Tibetan proverb 'don't say a bag is not heavy when you've only just started carrying it; don't say your daughter-in-law is good when she has only just arrived [to your house- hold]' indicates that a naamaa is under pressure to prove herself when she first gets married. She often is under pressure to serve the household members well and act obedient. Later on, however, after the new bride has given birth to children and has lived in her husband's household for many years, her status appears to often improve, such that family members listen to her more and pay more attention to her needs. Several years into her marriage, the naamaa may have proven that she cares for her husband's household and is loyal and committed to it. She is, moreover, the mother of her husband's children, and her husband's family typically would not want to see the children separated from their mother.

When a naamaa's husband or his family treat her abusively, they some- times appear motivated by a desire to make her contribute materially to the household through her labour while minimizing depletion of household resources, such as food. Thus, abusers sometimes make the victim work incredibly hard, all day long from early in the morning to late at night, responding with intimidation and excessive anger when the burden of work becomes too difficult for the victim to bear or when

some aspect of the work is not performed perfectly. Calling a victim lazy and gluttonous for eating a normal human amount of food is also a manifestation of abuse that is particular to this region.

Just as mothers-in-law were identified as common perpetrators of abuse in a study from India (Rew et al., 2013), while fathers-in-law and sister-in- law were cited in addition to mothers-in-law in a study of South Asians living in the United States (Raj et al., 2006), the current study reveals mothers- in-law, sisters-in-law, and fathers-in-law to be implicated in physical, emotional, or economic abuse of brides. Abuse of naamaa perpetrated by female inlaws emerges as a phenomenon at least as common as abuse by husbands. At times, husbands helped to shield their wives from the worst of their sister- in-law's or mother-in-law's abuse.

The gender division of labour in households, such that women's work is the sphere of women's attention, control, and organization, is likely one factor fuelling woman-perpetrated abuse, manifested as chronic criticism of the way a naamaa has performed her tasks or enforcement of an excessive bur- den of labour on a naamaa. Analysts of the Indian context have argued mothers-in-law may have been socialized into believing the system in which they themselves were reared is correct, leading them to treat daughters-in-law in the way they themselves were once treated (Rew et al., 2013). By treating daughters-in-law harshly, mothersin-law may believe they are teaching obedience, hard work, and proper roles to be carried out within the household.

My data reveals that in some cases living with in-laws is protective, while in others living with in-laws tends to increase the severity or possibility of abuse. Thus, in some cases in-laws intervened when violence was occurring in order to stop it. This protective force was, however, mediated by the fact that, in some cases, the spatial arrangements of family members' dwellings meant that parents and other household members did not always discover violence was occurring, a point Michalski (2004) notes in his review of the literature as well. Some women additionally told me

the actions of their abusive husbands increased in severity when their husbands' parents either died or stopped living with the couple. Living with parents-in-law, in these cases, did not prevent abuse altogether but served to restrict its severity.

On the other hand, abuse was in some cases perpetrated by fathers-in- law, sisters-in-law, or mothers-in-law. In some cases, a woman's mother-in- and husband both acted abusively towards her. In other cases, however, husbands acted as a protective force shielding women from the worst of in-law abuse. In some of these latter cases, abuse from in-laws prompted the couple to move away and set up a more nuclear-style household, at which point the abuse either ended or reduced in severity. In some cases, then, living with in- laws was not protective at all, but gave rise to abuse.

Neglect emerged as a common form of abuse in this region, and was felt by many study participants to be one of the most severe forms of marital mistreatment that exists. When a man decides he is in love with another woman, leaves his wife and children to live with his lover, and simply does not return home, his wife can be left with an unbearable burden of work, left to do all the men's and the women's tasks in the household on her own. In some of the cases I encountered, this neglect was compounded by a husband gambling away much of the household wealth or hoarding the household finances for use by himself and his lover.

A less severe form of neglect occurs when a man stays in his marriage, wanting the marriage to continue, but simply refuses to do much of the house- hold work. In these cases, while a man is spending his days playing basket- ball or hanging around the nearest county town or township seat, his wife is left with a superhuman workload, as she struggles to make up for her husband's negligence.

The fact that men are able to abandon their wives and still appropriate the majority of household finances for themselves and their extramarital lover, or alternatively to appropriate the

household wealth for their gambling addiction, reveals the restricted options and low bargaining power available to patrilocally married wives. In cases of neglect, women sometimes wait in agony, hoping their husbands will eventually forget about their lovers or their gambling and return home to their wife and children. Women in these cases likely wait for their husbands' return because their prospects for remarriage are difficult, because the prospects their children are likely to face following divorce are dire, and because they do not have land and a house in their natal household to which they feel able to permanently return. The difficulties women face in exiting patrilocal marriages is discussed in further detail below.

3.2. Matrilocal Marriage

In the study region, when a Tibetan man marries matrilocally, he is likely to find his fatherin-law holds primary control over household decisions and finances. Alternatively, his father-inlaw may have passed away and decision-making may be controlled by his mother-in-law, and perhaps by certain male in-laws, such as his wife's uncles. Later on, however, he may eventually attain the post of household head and decision-maker, once he is the father of the household's children and has been married for a number of years, and his parents-in-law are very old or have passed away.

In patrilocal marriage, death of a father often means his son takes over the father's role. In matrilocal marriage, death of a father may mean his wife takes over decision-making, rather than allowing that decision-making to be transferred to a newly married man who has not yet established his place within the household. Note that typically in either case, power does not devolve to younger women, though exceptions to this trend do exist.

According to study informants, matrilocally married women are under far less pressure than patrilocally married women to labour from dawn to dusk. Within my data, a woman's mother in particular appears as both typically more willing to help her daughter with the household tasks and

less interested in ensuring her daughter proves her material and labour-based usefulness to the household than is a naamaa's mother-in-law. In matrilocal marriage, a woman is surrounded by her native family, village, and social support network. When she has conflicts or arguments with her husband, she may be surrounded by family and community members who are more likely to sup- port her or may be less willing to judge her harshly than if she were a naamaa from another village. We must note, however, that many patrilocally married brides marry into households within their own natal village. In these cases, their physical proximity to their parents and relatives may be supportive.

In some of the cases I encountered, mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law spread rumours about their household's naamaa, by telling others she is lazy and does not work, even when this was untrue. Sometimes outrageous and untruthful claims were made by sisters-in-law or mothers-in-law, such as asserting the naamaa forces her mother-in-law to wait upon and serve her. In a context in which the younger generation, and daughters-in-law especially, are meant to serve and be obedient to the elder generation, these rumours are likely to arouse derision and stigma for the naamaa. In patrilocal marriage, in-laws have the power to lie and spread rumours because they are in familiar territory, near friends and relatives, while the new bride is often, at least at first, a relative stranger unfamiliar to community members.

Furthermore, in comparison to patrilocally married brides, a matrilocally married bride's bargaining power is significantly enhanced by the fact that, were divorce to occur, it is her husband who would leave the family and property and return to his native home and village, as opposed to she. Several informants told me matrilocally married husbands do not conflict with their male in-laws (that is, their father-in-law and brothers-in-law) nearly as often as patrilocally married wives conflict with their female in-laws (that is, their mother-in-law and sisters-in-law). According to

one informant, this is because, as a man, a matrilocally married husband is simply respected more by his wife's family. My data suggests that a woman's conflicts with her in- laws appear most often to stem from the in-laws' mistreatment of her. Common gender norms emphasizing hard work and obedience for women may, then, result in a situation in which abuse and mistreatment by in-laws is gender-based and primarily directed at women.

3.3. Marrying 'In the Middle'

In some cases, the bride's family pushes for a matrilocal arrangement, while the groom's family, feeling matrilocal marriage is a shameful position for men, is loath to marry matrilocally. In these cases, 'in the middle' marriages may be negotiated. Marrying 'in the middle' (བར་འདྲུག) was touted by some of the study informants for its benefits to women, since 'in the middle' arrangements, as compared to patrilocal marriage, are seen to allow women more access to their parents. 'In the middle' marriages also entail more responsibility for daughters to take care of their parents in old age. Marrying 'in the middle' appears to offer many of the same benefits to women that matrilocal marriage offers. This is because, unlike patrilocal marriage, once married 'in the middle', brides need not be too separated from their parents, natal family, and childhood support networks, and they do not need to be under pressure, and under the watch of in-laws, to work extremely hard at the household labour. I was told parents negotiate this type of marriage arrangement for the benefit of their daughters.

3.4. Divorce, Financial Status, and Household Marital Arrangements

In the event of DV, a patrilocally married woman's primary option is usually escaping temporarily to her parents' home. My data suggests that beating must generally be rather severe in order to be considered extraordinary or remarkable, as well as severe enough to warrant the victim escaping to her natal home. After a woman escapes to her natal home, a woman's family often

scolds a husband for his violence. In one case, the parents of a woman I spoke to compelled her abusive husband to take a vow that he would no longer drink alcohol.

It is also very common for families to insist their daughters work hard to reconcile with their husbands and in-laws, and to encourage daughters to return to their husbands' home. The notion that victims are partially to blame for DV appears pervasive.

My data suggests that in the case of women both suffering DV and desiring to divorce, the most common reaction is to discourage divorce and encourage reconciliation with abusive partners. However, families appear more likely to support their daughters to divorce if the woman has suffered prolonged and severe abuse, or if her husband has abandoned her altogether and refuses to return home. A woman's age and whether or not she has children also appear to be important factors in her family's support for divorce. A common line of thinking appears to be that if a woman is young, she may still be able to get remarried, while a marriage that has not produced children leaves women and their families free at least of the worry of children's plight post-divorce. Two issues that impact upon willingness to support divorce, namely the perceived necessity of remarriage and the potentially severe impact of divorce on children, is described in further detail below.

Informants spoke about the bad reputation divorce can bring to both individuals and their families. In fact, women's families at times appear to push for reconciliation with abusive partners out of concern for the family's reputation. An anonymous Tibetan language online post, for example, described just such a situation in the particular case of one victim of DV (Nyukchu Len [སྙུག་བཅུང་ལེན།] 2012).

Several interviewees described the stigma women can face following divorce. As implied by some interviewees, women who get divorced without getting remarried can be particularly

stigmatized. As one informant told me, a man or woman who divorces but cannot get remarried is considered particularly contemptible. Remaining at all times in a state of marriage, as opposed to singlehood, was also deemed by several informants as necessary from a material perspective. In the study region, household labour is clearly divided into the sphere of activities considered to be men's work and the sphere considered to be women's work, though there is some overlap between the two. It was considered by informants to be undesirable for a woman to live alone with her children because every time her household requires labour to be con- ducted by a man, she would need to impose upon the kindness of a male relative or fellow villager to undertake the task in question for her. Logistically and materially, this is a difficult position. While 'men's' tasks do not appear to be tasks that women are physically incapable of undertaking, the fact that certain tasks are not typically conducted by one or the other sex means that men or women typically never learn how to perform certain tasks.

Typically after a divorce, the parent who no longer lives with his or her child virtually never sees or speaks to the child again. Thus, to divorce can often mean losing all contact with one's children forever.

My data indicates that when a patrilocally married woman keeps custody of her children after a divorce, she still often remarries patrilocally into a second husband's household, most likely because of a lack of an adequate permanent residence in her natal home and the perceived necessity of remarriage. In this case, when getting remarried, she commonly must leave her children in her natal household, as her second husband and his family are not likely to want to take care of children that are not biologically theirs. In some cases, therefore, divorce leaves children in a state of near orphanhood, taken care of by grandparents or extended relatives, with the children no longer in contact with their father, and with the children's mother married into another family and village.

As study participants indicated, common post-divorce child custody practices in this region push many women to choose to stay in abusive relationships for the sake of their children.

Women married patrilocally are unlikely to possess any independently held land of their own. My data suggests that while a patrilocally married woman can stay in her parents' home if she divorces, she will not feel she belongs there on a permanent basis, since her brother has often married and has created his own household unit in her parents' home. As a result, according to many study informants, patrilocally married women feel they would have no adequate permanent residence were they to divorce their husbands. This acts as a significant barrier to exiting abusive marriages.[62]

A woman with a family that is both particularly supportive of her divorce from a patrilocal husband and in a relatively good position economically may face the following circumstances. Her parents may divide the household property between her brother and herself, giving her land, animals, and a separate house in which she may live on her own. This arrangement would allow her to remarry matrilocally, saving her the risk and potential hardship of another patrilocal marriage. Alternatively, families can support divorce and opt for a patrilocal remarriage.

When a patrilocally married woman gets divorced, her natal family carries the burden of providing the woman, and possibly her children as well, with a place to stay. The men of a woman's natal family are often also the individuals arranging her remarriage. Child custody arrangements and any payments made by the husband's family to the wife's upon divorce are also issues to be

[62] My interview data reveals that in certain nomadic areas, women may be given animals by their natal family which they take with them to their husband's household. In these areas, in the event of divorce, the woman's animals are typically returned to her. Though women in this case may be said to acquire an inheritance in the form of animals, their lack of land acquisitions leaves them in much the same position as those Tibetan women who do not inherit any animals. Options for divorce remain curtailed because, should the women desire to divorce, they are often left without a permanent residence or land of their own.

negotiated between the husband's natal family and the wife's natal family. Divorce, then, is much aided by the logistical, material, and practical support of women's families. The necessity to provide this logistical and practical support may provide families with an incentive to keep their daughters within their current marriages, so as to avoid the potential outcome of a woman being unable to remarry, and thus permanently provided for by her natal family, to avoid the risks and uncertainties that divorce can bring to children, including the possibility that a woman's natal family must permanently care for her children, and to avoid the impact of divorce on a family's reputation.

The fact that a woman's natal family can offer her a primary source of refuge from abuse gives a woman's family a lot of power when and if they pressure her to reconcile, even though this may be against her wishes. As Michalski (2004) states, in many developing country settings, in the event of DV "the partisan support that a woman receives generally comes in the form of economic support," namely "a willingness to provide a place to live or an 'exit'" (p. 664).

When a woman is working in an office or urban setting, obtaining her own salary and without need to rely on land or livestock for subsistence, she may not be as beholden to family and parental sanction if she desires to divorce. Such a circumstance would require that women are able to organize their own permanent residence post-divorce, and are capable of caring financially for their children if they obtain custody as well.

As more and more women in the study area become educated and work in urban-based employment, many women are not tied as intimately to the house- hold structure as they once were. Financially independent women may live alone and delay marriage for longer than did previous generations of women, or may be more likely than previous generations to divorce. In some of the

study sites, however, living alone can leave women vulnerable to the attentions and advances of men, sometimes in the form of unknown men arriving on women's property in the middle of the night, attempting to gain entry to women's abodes so as to proposition women for sex. The practice of men attempting to gain entry into women's homes at night in order to proposition women for sex is a well-known and common practice in a number of Tibetan areas. Women are less likely to be propositioned, however, if fathers and especially husbands are resident on their property. This practice, which I am calling 'night visits,' is sometimes felt by the women involved to be a threatening, scary, stressful experience.[63] Several women described fearful experiences of night visits to me. In one case I encountered, this fear was explicitly tied to a woman's decision to remain with an abusive husband. Fear of being single and therefore harassed by men was additionally listed as one reason a Tibetan woman stayed with her abusive boyfriend, in an anonymous post placed on a Tibetan women's rights website ("The Bad Boyfriend", 2013). A wider societal context that leads women to fear gender-based violence outside the home, then, can restrict women's capacity to exit abusive marriages, because women some- times feel they require the protection of a male partner. As noted previously, this is a pattern very similar to that described by Stark (2007), who conducted his DV research in the United States.

5. IMBALANCE THEORY AND DV IN THE STUDY AREA

Information gleaned from interviews, participant observation, and Tibetan language editorials, reveals that gender-unequal norms and stereotypes appear common in one or more areas of the study sites. Thus, Tibetan language editorials, books, and comments made by study participants indicate a belief that many women like to gossip and talk too much, do not know how to consider issues properly, or have a tendency to be jealous, petty and get angry too easily

[63] It must be noted, though, that the practice of night visits is not felt to be threatening and scary in every case. In some cases, for example, a boy and girl plan the boy's visit to the girl's house together, in advance of the visit.

(Gyaye Trabo [རྒྱ་ཡེ་བཀྲ་སྦྲོ]; Droma [སྒྲོལ་མ།] 2008; Jamyang Kyi [འཇམ་དབྱངས་སྐྱིད།] 2008; Gonbo Kyi [མགོན་པོ་སྐྱིད།] 2010; Dethong Wangmo [བདེ་སྟོང་དབང་མོ] 2011; Chi Me [འཆི་མེད།] 2012). Some interviewees told me it is commonly stated that women do not know much and women's words are not worth listening to. Additionally, in ritual and traditional practices women are often meant to show humility, displaying they are more respectful, humble, silent, and deferential than men. By so doing, women show they are good women and are of ritually lower status than men. My interactions with several informants suggests men are often accorded great respect and status within the household, while women are under pressure to be respectful and humble.

My data suggests the normativity of men's leadership within the house- hold is pervasive, and this leadership position includes the right to discipline wives, including via harsh verbal or physically violent means. A few inform- ants told me that, in certain parts of the study region, men who are considered afraid of their wives are looked down upon in their communities. If you are a husband who cannot slap your wife when she speaks harshly to you, I was told, then you are considered a little incompetent. My interactions with numerous informants suggests, moreover, that it is often more acceptable for men to be unfaithful to their wives than for women to do the same, and it is more acceptable for men to go out with friends, to drink and to smoke. Women may therefore be beaten by their husbands for transgressing the unequal gender norms allowing certain behaviour for men but proscribing it for women.

My data indicates that in some parts of the study area men tend to consider it shameful to marry matrilocally into a woman's family and either refuse outright or are very reluctant to do so. Some men are not willing to marry matrilocally unless the family they marry into is a family with more wealth, more power, and better connections than their own. It seems, then, that men are patently aware of the loss of power they face when marrying matrilocally and, feeling it is their

masculine right or desire to be in control, are relatively unwilling to accept circumstances that do not clearly place them in a position of leadership and authority within their households.

Matrilocal marriage may therefore fuel IPV, if husbands attempt to regain their sense of masculine dominance by becoming abusive towards their wives. More likely, however, is that proximity to the wife's parents, extended family, and childhood support networks may be protective. Other protective factors may include husbands' restricted bargaining power in matrilocal arrangements, manifested in a husband's need to leave his wife's land, household, and village in the event that his relations with his wife's family turn sour. In typical matrilocal arrangements, then, we may surmise the imbalance theory of DV may not be particularly relevant, because although men may feel emasculated by matrilocal arrangements, their residence within wives' households may restrict their ability to become abusive.

Household arrangements, including the distribution of decision-making power and household monetary control, can vary significantly in this region, even within the three forms of marriage (patrilocal, matrilocal, and 'in the middle) described above. In one case I encountered, a nomad woman was patrilocally married to a husband who refused to marry matrilocally. As the only child of her parents, she was duty-bound to live with her parents and care for them. Thus, for a number of years, the woman raised her son and lived with her parents, managing and controlling her household's finances as de facto household head, on her own, while her husband lived in his own natal household and visited her periodically. The couple's son, it was decided, would belong to his maternal grandparents. Once the woman's son became old enough to take care of his grandparents on his own, the wife moved in with her husband's family. Once she moved in with her husband, she no longer controlled decisions or managed the finances of her household, as she previously had.

Prior to moving in with her husband, this woman was derided by her husband for presenting the picture of an ‘inauspicious’, woman-headed household. Her husband often repeated a common Tibetan saying: ‘when women head their households, it is inauspicious’ (ཁྱིམ་བདག་ནག་མོས་བཟུང་ན་བཀྲ་མི་ཤེས།).

Her husband wanted to control the money of his wife’s household, even though he did not live with her and appears to have taken no part in her house- hold’s labour. When she refused to give him control of her household’s finances, however, he responded with belittling words, telling her, for example, that she is a woman and therefore does not know anything. Here we see the picture of a man attempting to regain his masculine dominance when faced with a wife who controls her own finances, in a pattern following the imbalance theory of DV.

Male control of household finances is the normative and prototypical scenario in the study sites. However, if a woman proves more capable than her husband in business ventures, practical problem-solving, or organizing and allocating household resources to ensure the highest profit or material benefit, she may obtain more power to control money and make decisions than her husband. Additionally, in cases where the husband has a tendency to whittle away the household finances on drink, he is sometimes deemed an untrustworthy custodian of the household income, and his wife is given control of the household funds. It is possible that men in these circumstances feel a loss of self-esteem. They could therefore turn to IPV in an attempt to regain their sense of themselves as men. In one case I encountered, a woman managed her household’s finances, but was beaten by her husband for her ‘disobedience’ when she refused to hand over money upon request.

In several of the cases I encountered, men appeared to hit their wives when they felt their wives were talking back to them, thereby refusing to silently accept their husbands’ harsh words or

criticism. In these cases, it appears women were transgressing a norm that they remain silently accepting, obedient, and of inferior status to their husbands. The immediate trigger to husbands' violence in these cases, then, appears to be the men's belief that their wives were unacceptably acting equal to them. This finding is largely in line with the proposals of the imbalance theory of DV. Moreover, in one case of severe abuse of a study participant, the participant's husband felt threatened by his wife's achievement, education, income, and fame, all of which were superior to his own. He therefore responded with abuse, in an attempt to regain his sense of masculine dominance.

5. DISCUSSION

The diversity of household forms found in the study region means that various options are available to women, such as matrilocal marriage or women's control of household finances. These options, however, tend to be dependent on a woman's family situation and on the wishes of her parents, parents-in-law, or other elders within her household. Moreover, despite the divergence seen among study participants, the underlying rule of households that nevertheless emerges, regardless of marital form, remains that of a patriarchal model stipulating a male head should manage household finances and make all important household decisions if he is alive and capable of undertaking the role. Others take on the role of controlling finances or making important decisions only in the male head's absence or when a man is deemed less competent than his wife.

Age-based and household-based privilege is evident in all of the marital forms. The elder generation of parents or grandparents is largely both respected and cared for by the younger, with the younger generation deferring and showing some obedience to the elder generation.

Household-based privilege is the privilege of those who are more native to a household than the individual newly married into that household. This privilege enhances the power of native house-

hold members relative to newly married brides or grooms. This privilege places in-laws of patrilocally married brides in a position to abuse brides if they so desire, and also results in a situation in which matrilocally married husbands do not have much power, at least for a number of years at the start of their marriage.

More nuclear arrangements can give rise to reduced frequency of abuse by in-laws but are also arrangements which can remove the protective power of in-laws to intervene and stop violence as it is occurring. The presence of in- laws can also be protective because husbands appear less likely to become violent when members of the elder generation are present. The question of the impact of marital arrangement on women's DV vulnerability rests in part, then, on the question of who the abuser is. When in-laws are likely to abuse a woman, matrilocal and 'in the middle' arrangements are most protective, with matrilocal marriage being the best option, since a woman's in-laws may be least likely to abuse her in the presence of her parents and natal family. If the abuser is a woman's intimate partner, both patrilocal and matrilocal arrangements can be protective, as both in-laws and a woman's natal family members can intervene to stop violence as it is occurring. If the abuser is the woman's intimate partner, matrilocal marriage is once again the best option, because of women's proximity to their natal families. A woman's in-laws may be more likely to blame her for the abuse she suffers or to support her husband when intimate partner conflicts occur. A woman's natal family, on the other hand, may be more likely to support the woman. In some cases I encountered, both a woman's husband and her in-laws abused her, with at times husbands and in- laws together criticizing and emotionally attacking a woman. These cases were mostly patrilocal marriage arrangements.

Prevalent beliefs around masculine superiority as well as the justifiability and commonplace nature of DV emerge as factors underlying women's vulnerability in all marital arrangements, as

these beliefs mediate families' level of support for abused daughters. While the material, logistical, and practical concerns of families are crucial, the realm of ideas and norms also plays a primary role in the support, or lack thereof, that women receive from their natal families in the event of abuse. It is the ideational realm that leads families to either consider DV a serious problem warranting measures to ensure women's protection, or alternatively to consider the victim blame-worthy and DV to be relatively justifiable. My data reveals that the belief that a woman is partially to blame for DV is a pervasive notion among her friends and family, while at times the assumption that if a man has beaten his wife, he would have had a good reason for doing so was also seen. In one case I encountered, for example, a woman's father repeatedly supported his daughter's husband despite the husband's periodic beatings of his wife, because the husband was adept at convincing his father-in-law that he was both caring towards his parents-in-law and that his beatings were justified.

The familial interventions in DV that I encountered, resting often in a desire to reconcile couples, often did not remove women from abusive situations or aid in ending the abuse women suffered. Rather, temporary mitigation and a relative decrease in DV severity was often all that familial intervention appeared to achieve. Some study participants, noting their mothers had told them to work hard in their marriages, made serious and prolonged efforts to bear their abuse in silence, before ever approaching their natal families for support. One informant told me families believe their daughters simply will suffer a little when they get patrilocally married, and families therefore tolerate what they believe to be the inevitable.

Financial independence or the ability to access an adequate permanent site of residence in the event of divorce can be crucial for women as it provides them with a fall-back position, an exit option, should their marriages become unbearable, a point made by household bargaining theorists,

described above. When husbands and in-laws are aware brides have an exit option, moreover, they may treat brides with more respect. Hyde's (1999) study of Irish women, for example, suggests individuals can possess bargaining power and garner respect just by virtue of the fact that they could possibly act in certain ways, even when those possibilities are never carried out. The issue of a lack of an adequate permanent residence post-divorce places patrilocally married women in a particularly disadvantaged position, leading a number of the women I encountered to tolerate abuse and remain in abusive marriages. In a patrilocal marriage, women are also often socially isolated, separated from their family support networks, and under pressure to work hard and produce materially for their husband's household. Importantly, the form of abuse considered to be most severe by many study participants, namely husbands' total neglect of wives, appears unlikely to occur in matrilocal arrangements, as men in matrilocal marriages do not always manage the household's finances, and can be dismissed from the household if they conflict with their wives' families.

Some of the social and cultural restrictions on divorce applying to patrilocally married women apply to matrilocally married women as well. Thus, a matrilocally married woman who is considered too old to easily remarry may have difficulty divorcing her husband even if he becomes abusive. The pervasiveness of victim-blaming attitudes expressed by study participants and inform- ants, moreover, suggests matrilocally married women are likely to face some of these attitudes in the event of DV. These attitudes may affect the level of support these women obtain from family and friends. The fact that divorce often means a child can lose virtually all contact with one parent forever is a concern faced by both matrilocally and patrilocally married mothers when considering divorce.

6. CONCLUSION

Drawing on interviews and participant observation conducted in a number of villages and towns on the northeastern edge of the Tibetan plateau, this article looked into various types of Tibetan marital arrangements as well as various arrangements in the study area regarding household decision-making and control of finances. Extended family living arrangements and abuse by women's in-laws emerged as crucial sites of analysis when understanding DV in this region, as has been shown by studies conducted in other non-Western settings as well.

This study adds to the current state of knowledge by discussing the specific impact of household marital form on DV, a topic that is under-addressed within research. This study adds to the available literature by finding that matrilocal arrangements should offer the best DV protection while patrilocal arrangements put women in a position of greatest vulnerability. Women's vulnerability in patrilocal marriage hinges on their land-based material constraints, their social isolation, and women's low status vis-à-vis husbands and in-laws who possess household-based privilege in patrilocal arrangements. However, various sites of vulnerability exist in all marital forms, including within a third arrangement, which has here been termed marrying 'in the middle.' These additional sites of vulnerability include cultural constraints, such as the perceived necessity for marriage, and for remarriage in the event of divorce; post-divorce child custody practices that can place children in particularly difficult circumstances; the general tendency of families to hope for and encourage women's reconciliation with abusive intimate partners; the pervasiveness of victim-blaming attitudes, which may affect the type and level of support women receive from their natal families; and common notions that masculine dominance and household leadership is normative, leading at times to men abusing their partners in an attempt to regain dominance. As such, the study findings largely support both the emphasis on women's fall-back position found within theories of household bargaining power and the imbalance theory of DV.

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ARTICLE 4

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 (M. P. 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 twentyfour 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 et al., 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 et al., 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 (ཚེ་རིང་སྒྲོལ་མ།[TseringDroma], n.d.; འཆི་མེད།[Chime], 2012; རྒྱ་ཡེ་བཀྲ་ཤིས།[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་གཅིག་མ་སྨྲ། ཁྱི་དང་ཟླ་མ་སྨྲ།). 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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ARTICLE 5

The Discourse of Tibetan Women's Empowerment Activists[64]

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Introduction

Since the 1980s, the discourse of *suzhi* (素质), or 'human quality,' has been pervasive in China (Kipnis, 2007; Murphy, 2004). According to this discourse, individuals' quality, or *suzhi*, is linked to the nation's strength, and is a product of the extent to which individuals are civilized and modern (Jacka, 2009; Judd, 2002; Murphy, 2004). According to *suzhi* discourse, improving one's quality requires discipline and single-minded diligence; high quality is associated with the educated, wealthy, and urban; and those with high quality are the ones who succeed in a competitive market economy (Jacka, 2009; Judd, 2002; Kipnis, 2007; Murphy, 2004). Moreover, as Kipnis states, "the notion of 'lacking quality' is used to mock or discriminate" (2007, p. 388). As Jacka further describes, "The supposed low *suzhi* of migrants…is read from their speech, clothes, and bodily comportment" (2009, p. 531).

Judd's analysis of the work of various branches of the All-China Women's Federation in the 1990s reveals the Federation officers attempted to raise the quality of rural women by providing rural women with training in vocational skills. Federation officers understood education and training, leading to "competitive entrepreneurial success," as raising women's quality (Judd, 2002, p. 44). Federation officers additionally believed that "increasing women's quality will win respect

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for women and thereby raise women's social status" (p. 24). Other state discourses around women's status have similarly asserted women's emancipation is a matter of women's own individual skills, ability, and effort. According to this notion, women must abandon "the old attitudes of subservience and doubt about their own abilities" while "self-emancipation involves women improving themselves based on their individual skills and effort." Self-confidence on the part of women as well as effort and skill, obtained via a process of "self-development through education," are thus considered necessary for women's emancipation (Leung, 2003, p. 371).

In a line of argument similar to the *suzhi* and state discourses described above, the Tibetan women's empowerment activists interviewed for the current study argue that women's empowerment is a matter of individual women's skills and professional, intellectual, or economic competence. The activists focus on improving women's education, health care, and training as prerequisites or a means to obtaining this competence. Like the Federation officers described by Judd, the women's empowerment activists of the current study believe economic and professional success will automatically improve women's standing in society. In fact, many of the activists argue this is the *only* factor that is crucial to the question of Tibetan women's social status. Like *suzhi* discourse, the women's activists of the current study elide structural and wider societal factors in oppression, preferring instead to argue that if women suffer from low status, this situation has resulted from individual women's lack of competence. The arguments of some of the activists, like many of the proponents of *suzhi* discourse, then, include a heavy dose of victim-blaming, associating poor economic success, lack of prominence in society, and powerlessness within the household with individuals' own character and competence flaws rather than with structural and power-based inequalities (Jacka, 2009; Kipnis, 2007; Murphy, 2004).[65]

[65] It may be important to note that the women's empowerment activists of the current study did not use the Chinese term *suzhi*, nor did they, for the most part, use a term which might be considered its Tibetan equivalent (རྒྱུ་སྒྲུབ). Secondly, while

Recent Chinese history has seen women's emancipation tied with both the modernity of the Chinese nation and its strength. During the late Qing dynasty, the Republican era, and the May Fourth movement, women's emancipation was deemed necessary to counteract the nation's weakness and to enhance the nation's ability to ward off colonizers and govern itself. Hershatter describes the turn of the twentieth century in China as "an atmosphere of national crisis" (2004, p. 1029). The activists of the current study express a sense of crisis for Tibetan society as well. Tibetan communities have found themselves in a rapidly modernizing world in which urbanization and Sinicization are ever-present realities. According to informants, these forces are threatening to cause the disappearance of Tibetan culture, to annihilate the basis for a distinct Tibetan identity altogether. Activists describe a social context in which Tibetans' awareness of traditional forms of knowledge is on a precipice, in danger of irreversible decline and in need of emergency protection measures.[66] A prevalent feeling appears to be that social change is often indicative of Sinicization, rather than indicative of development in a Tibetan way and on Tibetan terms. In this context, activists appear to believe women must join men to become professionally successful, because this will help to strengthen Tibetan society as a whole, allowing Tibetans to compete in an increasingly marketized and Han-dominated world, and thereby have the power to survive as a distinct ethnic group which preserves Tibetan culture and identity.

In the context of crisis in which Republican-era reformers found themselves, women's education was promoted, because educated women were deemed to make good mothers, and

there are many similarities between *suzhi* discourse and the discourse of the current study's women's empowerment activists, the activists do not hold to the priorities of the Chinese state nor are they focused on exactly the same social problems. Since *suzhi* discourse has been used as a tool to mask and promote unfair economic practices, as well as a tool to enhance citizens' acceptance of governmental policies they might otherwise resent (Jacka, 2009; Kipnis, 2007; Murphy, 2004), it should be noted that the current study's activists do not fall in line with *suzhi* discourse in these ways. Thus, rather than a wholesale appropriation of *suzhi* discourse, the women's activists have drawn on a Chinese discursive environment which emphasizes civilized, modern behavior as well as individual discipline (Jacka, 2009) to arrive at similar but not entirely identical conclusions.

[66] The disappearance of the Tibetan language is a particular point of concern that is commonly voiced by many.

good mothers were considered necessary for a strong nation (Hershatter, 2004). Similarly, in the context of crisis in which the Tibetan activists of the current study find themselves, women's education is advocated as a means of strengthening the nationality by creating mothers who are competent in instructing the next generation. Republican-era reformers also tended to subordinate feminist priorities to those of the nation at large (Hershatter, 2004), a pattern which is found among the current study's activists as well.

The discourse of the women's empowerment activists repeatedly revolve around deep contradictions, contradictions which are at times so glaring that they involve, for example, an activist defending the very forms of women's oppression which she is trying to change. Literature on discourses prevalent in recent Chinese history also reveal deep contradictions, such as Maoist state discourse asserting women are equally competent to men coupled with "the widely shared belief that women were suited for lighter and less-skilled tasks" (Hershatter, 2004, p. 1021; Leung, 2003) or the promotion of gender equality coupled with the confinement of women to positions of lesser power (Hershatter, 2004). Claiming equality when true equality is not exactly what is promoted is likewise a common pattern found within not only the accounts of the women's empowerment activists but the accounts of many other interviewees of the current study as well.

However, the women's activists reveal an additional type of contradiction, one that is not as readily found in state-driven Chinese discourse. This contradiction results from activists' attempts to improve women's status while at the same time attempting to preserve Tibetan culture, defend Tibetan culture against accusations of backwardness, and maintain Tibetan social unity and cohesiveness. The need to preserve Tibetan culture has been discussed above. Additionally, in a world in which state discourse portrays Han as more modern, progressive, and enlightened than the more backwards societies of ethnic minorities (Barabantseva, 2009; Yi, 2005), the activists

appear acutely aware that acknowledgement of Tibetan women's low status could lend credence to notions of Tibetans as backwards and uncivilized. As a result, they tend to deny, justify, or sidestep discussion of practices within Tibetan society that create gender inequality, apparently in an attempt to maintain a dignified face of Tibetan society to outsiders. Finally, the activists' fear of social disharmony within Tibetan communities is another reason behind their opposition to claims that Tibetan cultural practices have caused gender inequality, as such claims could instigate conflict between women and men. At a time when Tibetan culture is felt to be in decline, Tibetan political protesters have emphasized that unity among Tibetans is vital. While the activists of the current study made no political statements whatsoever, their concerns appear to mirror those of protesters in this one regard, that is, in their concern with maintaining unity within Tibetan communities.

The following discussion is organized around the principal concerns of the women's empowerment activists, as voiced in their accounts, namely (1) Tibetan cultural preservation or a return to traditional values, (2) community unity, and (3) advancement, particularly economic and educational advancement, of Tibetan society. We shall additionally look at the contradictory pressures faced by activists, leading to tensions and contradictions in their descriptions of Tibetan women's status.

Methods

This paper is based on a 15-month period of fieldwork in one region of Amdo. The paper is drawn from research looking into domestic violence among Tibetan households in the study region, involving in-depth, unstructured interviews with 76 women and 24 men. Interviewees were

purposively sampled for a range of age and education levels as well as both rural and urban-based residence. Not all interviewees were victims or perpetrators of domestic violence, but a significant minority of interviewees were. For ethical reasons, the research project did not focus on one particular village or township. Rather, various farming villages, nomadic settlements, and towns on the northeastern edge of the Tibetan plateau were visited.

None of the research interactions were conducted through a translator. All interviews were conducted directly in Tibetan, or in Chinese if the interviewee was more comfortable speaking Chinese. Interview recordings were also transcribed directly in their original language, so as to avoid the changes of meaning that come with translation into English.

While in-depth unstructured interviews with women and men were the core of this research, this research was additionally informed by many years of personal experience and interaction with the study region, as well as by participant observation of family life, conducted while staying with local families.

Please note that while the research giving rise to this paper is a research project focused on domestic violence, this paper is not in fact discussing the dynamics of family life or of domestic violence. Rather, while women and men were interviewed regarding their personal marital relationships and personal experience of domestic violence, an additional group of interviewees termed ‘women’s empowerment activists’ were also interviewed. This group of interviewees have provided the data upon which the current paper is based. Women’s empowerment activists are individuals who have engaged in activism to enhance gender equality or to improve women’s opportunities and the prominence of women in Tibetan society.

The accounts of six women’s empowerment activists are discussed within this paper. The women’s empowerment activists are Tibetan women and men residing on the northeastern edge

of the Tibetan plateau. They are individuals who have undertaken independent, private initiatives by which they have created spaces dedicated to women's writing and publishing, published articles on the topic of women's status, led seminars in which women university students were urged to become independent and self-reliant, given lectures on the importance of treating women well, or expanded educational opportunities for girls.[67] In particular, this paper looks into the activists' views on Tibetan women's rights and status, in an attempt to understand why these individuals have worked to empower women, and why violence against women has not been part of the focus of their work.

For this paper, information from participant observation and informal conversations conducted during fieldwork is drawn upon for supplementary or background information, as is information from interviews with those individuals who are not women's empowerment activists.

Tibetan Cultural Preservation or a Return to Traditional Values

Activists felt that modern changes to Tibetan society have been accompanied by deeply troubling consequences. They therefore spoke of a general context in which Tibetan culture and identity are facing the prospect of disintegration. As described by one activist, "Tibetan people are deteriorating, and so is our nationality. Now everyone is thinking about how our culture is deteriorating. In general, culture is something to be developed, but now we don't even think about development. It is deteriorating" (male activist). As this activist further explained, "if people

[67] Please note that a total of 14 women's empowerment activists were interviewed for the current study, but only the accounts of 6 of these individuals were analyzed in depth for this paper. The conclusions of this paper, however, follow a number of similarities found in the accounts of most of the 14 women's activists.

continue to deteriorate, our nationality will turn into a race only and everything else, our culture, will be common [i.e. shared or indistinct]" (male activist).[68] As stated by another activist:

> [Many people don't pay attention to traditional Tibetan forms of knowledge because] they don't know about traditional culture. And secondly they have studied the culture which opposes traditions…Many people say that you can't send kids to school because they come back home and don't like religion or their ethnic group or their traditional culture. But the students aren't to blame, because it's actually the parents' responsibility. If you send your kid to the monastery, he would turn into a religious person. If you send them to a place where they only study Tibetan knowledge, they will care about this. If you send him to a place where he will only learn Han Chinese culture, then if this culture does not become a part of his thinking, it means he didn't really study. If he comes home and says he is not interested in Tibetan traditions, it is a sign that he has studied [Han Chinese] culture. (male activist)

This negative impact of schooling was felt by this activist to accrue from both those schools which educate students primarily via lessons conducted in the Chinese language as well as from Tibetan-medium schools (male activist). External reports have also criticized education in China, including Tibetan-medium education, as giving Tibetan students "little insight into their own culture and history" (*State Department Report on Human Rights: 2013*, 2014). Likewise, one activist spoke about the younger generation's lack of awareness of Tibetan traditions, and of a decline in the

[68] Accounts of declining Tibetan traditions are common. According to one account, for example, an elderly traditional Tibetan medicine doctor was brought to tears by losses within the Tibetan medical tradition, whereby medical students in current times do not understand the basic values underpinning medical practice (conference entitled "The Transmission of Tibetan Medicine: Spiritual Growth, Questions of Method and Contemporary Practice," 2014). Other accounts, including those of one of the women's activists, refer to loss of language and traditional knowledge due to nomad resettlement policies.

morality of Tibetans' behavior. He is therefore intent on promoting a return to traditional Tibetan values.

Some of the activists in fact feared that further freedoms for women would lead women down the negative path men have already begun to travel in modern times. As modern life has caused men to drink more, gamble more, abandon their household responsibilities more, and engage more in extramarital affairs, the fear is that women will simply follow along this negative path if they are allowed more freedom and rights. Additionally, in the case of both women's activists and other interviewees, a fear that improvements in women's status might go too far or in some cases has already gone too far is apparent. This fear caused interviewees to voice worries that men may become subordinate to women, mothers-in-law may become subordinate to daughters-in-law, women may give up their family responsibilities once they become successful, women may begin believing they do not need to work hard, and women may begin to drink and gamble and fight. One informant noted a common fear is that rises in women's status will cause women to begin engaging in marital infidelity.[69] Other possibilities, whereby the focus shifts from controlling women's freedom to a change in community norms or practices such that more pressure is placed upon men to act responsibly and respectfully, are not voiced by the activists.

We can see in the above accounts that some of the activists hold to notions that women must sacrifice by working hard for their families and should not become 'too' dominant within the household. It is not surprising, then, that the activists believe the traditional roles of women and men should not see a radical shift or equalization, a belief that appears to be built upon an inherent fear that women's rights could cause women to take on the harmful behavioral traits of men, could upset the balance and structure of Tibetan families, and could cause an unwelcome decline in

[69] Some of the interviewees indicated men are far more likely to engage in marital infidelity than women, and that men's infidelity is more acceptable than women's.

behaviors by which Tibetans remain distinctly identifiable as 'Tibetan.' One activist, for example, believes patrilocal marriage, the most normative type of marriage in the study region, is more desirable than matrilocal marriage because men should not be expected to adjust to a family other than their own, while such pressures on women are acceptable and proper. Activists also argued that women's modesty and respect for others, and their ritually-sanctioned humility vis-à-vis others, must always be maintained. Some of the activists therefore emphasized that no matter how highly positioned a woman becomes professionally, she must maintain a distinctly and identifiably Tibetan mode of behavior, particularly within the home. Thus, according to one activist, "Tibetan women have their own wonderful way of doing things, and this cannot be destroyed, like taking care of guests, being respectful to your husband and the elderly…Even if you are the chairman of the country, you still can't destroy this" (female activist). Another activist likewise stated that "even if you are the president of a country, women should not change the appearance and manner they have always had" (female activist).

Community Unity

The activists appear to feel a deep-seated anxiety that a feminist push for women's rights and vocal calls for a change in the treatment of women will cause cleavages and conflict, thereby causing detriment to the unity of Tibetan society. Activists' dislike of complaints around women's household labor burden likewise appears to come from a belief that such complaints will cause marital discord, thus undercutting the unity and harmony of families. As a result, the activists

tended to voice a certain disregard for those who openly and vocally push for women's rights or an improvement to women's status. As one activist explained:

> I like to do the work of my family and office myself, because if I do everything myself, I do not harm others a lot. I think no matter what work you do, sincerity and good intentions are primary. Good intentions and demeanor are the key to the door of rights. There is no meaning in struggling for rights in a way such that women and men argue with jealousy towards each other. (female activist)

As stated by one activist:

> When those women from my home area who have some learning argue for women's rights, they talk about how women from my area are not allowed to touch race horses and how they have to do the dishes…Riding horses is by nature men's role and women don't need to touch the horses…Doing the dishes is the work of women. Men also have their work, so it's right for women to do this work. If everyone undertakes their own responsibility, it's beneficial for the happiness of the family. Otherwise by arguing for rights you just cause conflict with your husband. (male activist)

The point is not to refrain from promoting an improvement in women's status altogether, but to promote women's rights in the correct way. The correct way, for the activists, involves maintaining social and family cohesion even whilst attempting to empower women. This maintenance of cohesion requires refraining from accusing men or pointing the finger at many specific social practices.

A number of self-immolators and political protesters in Tibetan areas have called for unity among Tibetans, or have stressed the importance of strengthening Tibetan culture and identity[70]. "Don't forget you are Tibetans," states a message left behind by one self-immolator[71], implying in this case the self-immolator's belief that the current period is a critical juncture in Tibetan history in which the very identity of Tibetan people is in danger of disintegration. The women's activists' concerns around pre-empting any discourses that could lead to conflict in Tibetan society therefore echoes self-immolators' and protesters' concerns, and is likely derived from the notion that the strength and continued existence of Tibetan culture and identity requires unity.

Economic and Educational Advancement of Tibetan Society

In their activities to empower women, the activists are primarily concerned with enhancing women's educational and professional attainment. Thus, the women's activists have focused their activities on projects in the sphere of women's education, women's health, writing and publishing opportunities for women, and improving women's confidence to strive towards educational and professional goals. On the one hand, activists indicated, intelligent and capable women make for intelligent and capable mothers who can raise their children to succeed. Additionally, women joining men in the sphere of professional achievement appears to be seen as a means for Tibetans to thrive, to not be left behind in an economically developing world.[72]

[70] Reference: "Hundreds of Tibetans Detained in Chamdo Over 'Unity' Campaign," 2014, *Labrang monk Jayang Jinpa reflects on his daring 2008 protest*, 2013, "Self-immolator leaves message of 'unity and solidarity' among Tibetans," 2012, "Tibetan Comedian Released from Jail in Poor Health," 2014.

[71] Reference: "17-year-old self-immolator's last note calls for the Dalai Lama's return and Tibet's independence," 2012.

[72] One activist, however, focused on the importance of better religious education for nuns.

Thus, one activist made the point that women must begin achieving as much as men for the benefit of Tibetan society as a whole. She therefore stated the following:

> Every couple is equal, both members of a couple have PhDs, both have knowledge, both are office workers, both are bosses, or both have the exact same status. If all families are like this then society gets better, and if society gets better so does the ethnic group. This level has not been reached yet. [We are] still far below [this]. (female activist)

This activist is saying it is no longer acceptable to allow only men to achieve in extra-domestic spheres while women do not achieve prominent positions and visible success. Rather, both men and women need to achieve equally so that Tibetan society as a whole can advance.

According to another women's activist:

> To improve the capability of people, the capability of women first needs to improve…For [economically] developed places, from the time a woman is pregnant, [people from those places] have a lot of methods and knowledge regarding instructing children…The person who stays with children is the mother, and so mothers are key. Mothers' behavior, manner of speaking, and lifestyle influence their children…As the child is growing up, until he/she starts going to school, the most important person is the mother. (male activist)

Here, women's role as mothers is a crucial site upon which to advance the entire community, not only because mothers' instruction fosters the next generation, but also because 'economically developed' communities are particularly knowledgeable about how to train children well. An inherent sense of competition, and the felt need for Tibetans to keep up in a world in which other communities are more advanced, is therefore implied.

Since modernization is the primary aim, activists have attempted to improve women's belief in their own capacities, particularly in the realm of modern economic and professional success. Activists therefore place a lot of emphasis on enhancing women's self-confidence to strive professionally and academically. For some of the activists, this means working to provide women with spaces separate from men in which they can practice or improve their academic skills or skills in writing and expression.[73] As stated by a Tibetan woman who was not interviewed for the current study but who produced a video promoting Tibetan women's rights, "[Women] are always lowering themselves, saying 'I can't do anything because I'm a woman.' We need to say 'I can,' and then we can help our people" ("Radio Interview with T. Drolma," 2010). One women's activist described her advice to female university students that it is important "to take initiative…, [to] study hard, and [to] reject the idea that…one should always depend on a husband or that men should support women." This activist went on to state that "women should have their own ability and competence. And on top of being a great woman, if you have compassion, then you can be of benefit to society, your ethnic group, and to human beings" (female activist). Women's confidence, independence, and achievement is therefore promoted, with concerns for the strength or benefit of Tibetan society at large never far from activists' minds.

When activists present examples of successful women, as a means of enhancing Tibetan women's self-confidence, they focus primarily on modern forms of success. Thus, a women's activist who conducts educational training programs for Tibetan girls stated the following:

[73] One activist, for example, stated that women need their own space to write in order for women to get the chance to catch up to men in skill and to think that they are capable of publishing. Another activist conducts educational training programs for girls, which he conducts separately from his educational training programs for boys. He explained the reasons behind his actions as follows: "By specifically separating women,…it makes you think that girls could rival the boys in singing or leading or any way that your potential is revealed. The girls can speak courageously. They are even better than [other girls] in playing ball games. Everyone's the same and equal because boys aren't there to keep the girls down."

> I brought a Tibetan at Harvard to my [area to talk to the female students attending my training program]…, and I told the students to work hard, that this woman is a Tibetan and she came from the most famous school in the world, that she is the same as my students…Then I brought the head of Motorola in Asia, and I introduced this woman to my students and told them she was the head of one of the famous companies of Asia, that even though she is a woman she has this much capability, that the only reason other women are not like her is because of a lack of opportunities and lack of study…I also invited the head of education in the American embassy, a woman with a PhD…to my [area] and told my students…she is a leader in the embassy. Nobody can go to America to study without [her] permission. When schools cooperate with each other, they have to go through her office. [She] has all that power. [I told the students] the only difference [between people like her and my students] is whether or not they study, whether or not they get opportunities, and whether or not they work hard. I told them there is no reason for them to think that they are just women, Tibetans, or nomads. (male activist)

Similarly, the above-mentioned woman who produced a video promoting Tibetan women's rights stated the following in her video: "I'd like to say that like foreign women who can even be leaders of their nations, who are independent and educated – I hope we could be like that…Our hope is all Tibetan female students will aspire to these things" (Drolma, 2010).

Given the many examples of strong Tibetan women that exist within Tibetan history, it is surprising that the activists prefer to look largely to the example of Han and Western women as proof that women can be as capable of success as men. While the activists are clearly intent on improving the self-confidence of Tibetan women, it is surprising they do not additionally choose to emphasize the great achievements of women in Tibetan history. Instead, rather than the

historical achievements of Tibetan women religious masters (Allione, 2000; Diemberger, 2007), female historical figures who displayed strength in adverse family circumstances (རྒྱལ་ཡེ་དཀྲུ་བོ[GyayeTrabo], n.d.), or Tibetan women who have been involved in politics within the royal court (Diemberger, 2011), it seems the activists need successes more associated with modern educational and professional achievement to use as examples. In an article published by one of the women's activists, for example, the author emphasizes the publishing, academic, and non-profit public health activities that women have been undertaking in recent years as evidence for her argument that women have the capacity to succeed.[74]

The activists' drive to economically and professionally modernize Tibetan society is not necessarily in contradiction to their concern for cultural preservation, as the two may be seen as mutually reinforcing goals rather than disparate aims. If Tibetans as a group are strong, they not only maintain a dignified face to the outside world, as a group they also gain the skills to compete economically with other ethnic groups and therefore gain the necessary strength to survive in a world in which Tibetans as a community are in danger of being consumed and subsumed by both decadent urban values and Sinicizing forces. As described above, activists spoke of the loss of Tibetan culture and decline in morality of Tibetans brought with urbanization and economic development. In this context, what we see here is a drive to modernize or change only as much as necessary to gain the strength to withstand forces that could bring about the decline of Tibet. According to the activists, therefore, women should succeed educationally and professionally, and become intelligent and competent, while at the same time holding to Buddhist values and maintaining their traditional role within the household.

[74] This Tibetan language article is not cited here for the purpose of maintaining the anonymity of the interviewee.

Blaming Women for Their Own Low Status

Activists voiced the argument that women need not struggle for rights by arguing or debating about this topic. Rather, they argued, women should simply diligently study and work, becoming successful in extra-domestic spheres, and this will automatically bring status and esteem to individual women who deserve it. The implication, then, is that women are not to attain status by calling for men's behavior to change, or by calling for norms and patterns of household or social power relations to shift. Rather, despite their heavy workload, despite socialization teaching women they will be incompetent from a young age, and despite active disparagement of women's voices and women who express strong opinions[75], the activists still indicate that any problems of women's low status are the individual problems of women themselves. This argument is in part a means by which to sidestep a focus on issues that could instigate community divisions, a concern of the activists that was described above. This argument also serves the purpose of focusing on only those limited aspects of women's empowerment which the activists wish to focus on, so that Tibetan traditions can be maintained while the ethnic group is simultaneously strengthened. Finally, this argument is in part the result of beliefs held by the activists that are in some ways deeply conventional and therefore uninterested in altering attitudes towards women in society.

While activists referred to women's heavy burden of household labor as problematic, the significant amount of labor which women undertake for their households was not in itself deemed sufficient to entitle women to equal attention and respect as men, or equal say in household

[75] The gender-unequal social phenomena listed in this sentence were phenomena described by the women's activists as well as by other interviewees. The activists, however, refrained from labelling these phenomena with the term 'inequality.'

decision-making. Rather, the activists argued that women should display exceptional capacities in order to be worthy of treatment equal to that which men receive. As described by one activist:

> You have to admit it when you are not competent. If you are competent, you automatically get respect. If you can do all the work and get all the money for the family, then the whole family will respect you and listen to you…For example, if you are a woman without achievement in your work, who doesn't know how to manage the family, who doesn't know how to cook well, then these women are just saying empty words if they say they need rights. Those women do not have much right to talk about rights…Women should elevate their own capacity and foster self-respect…If you can develop your own ability in study, work, family, and connections, the members of society will believe in gender equality…When this level has been reached, there won't be much necessity to struggle for rights. (female activist)

As this activist further explained, "if you have capability, needless to say you will get respect from your family, and at the same time you will get rights and equality. For example, everyone will look upon an athlete who is impressive at running and jumping…as an example to follow" (female activist). Several other activists of the current study likewise voiced the notion that rights or status is not something that can be given to women by others. Rather, they argued, women should simply work hard and become successful if they want more rights.

This argument, like *suzhi* discourse, individualizes the problem of low status to individuals' own capacities. In so doing, the activists pre-empt the potentially painful realization that broader, deep-seated problems within Tibetan society, extending to the attitudes of all community members,

can harm women. The picture we are left with is one in which men automatically deserve decision-making power[76] and attention within the household, while women must prove exceptional capabilities beyond the heavy burden of labor they are already undertaking in order to prove they are worthy of an improvement in the respect and attention they are given by family members.

The activists appear to have come to this conclusion in part because so many more educational and professional opportunities are extended to women currently than was the case in the recent past. As stated by one women's activist, for example, "now women are sent to school as often as men, so women should grasp this opportunity and not allow it to get lost…If you don't make use of this opportunity, then you are to blame" (female activist).

Other victim-blaming attitudes of the activists likewise follow those aspects of *suzhi* discourse that tie poor treatment or low status to individuals' own inferior characters. One activist, for example, stated, "Since women are meek, they suffer a loss when they are given away in [patrilocal] marriage. People think…even if men [marry matrilocally], they are courageous and so do not suffer a loss" (male activist). According to this activist, then, women's poor treatment in patrilocal marriage is a result of their own inferior character traits. Men, according to this activist, are treated better in matrilocal marriage because of their inherently superior characters. In another example, some activists justified men's higher status as being the natural product of men's physical or mental superiority to women.

[76] The prototypical scenario in the study region, as described by both activists and other interviewees, is that men hold primary decision-making power within families.

Defending Tibetan Culture and Avoiding the Label of Gender Inequality

Activists appeared acutely aware of the possibility that, if Tibetan women were labelled as suffering from low status, Tibetan society could be labelled backward and inferior to other ethnic groups. Many activists therefore denied that gender inequality is a major problem within Tibetan society. The activists stressed that women's heavy work burden or parents' tendency to send only sons to school are not mean-spirited activities undertaken in the spirit of deliberate cruelty to girls and women, but are instead the unintended products of historical circumstance. Practices in Tibetan society deemed better for women than the practices of Han or other ethnic groups were also emphasized, as was the variability of practices within families and communities, a variability which activists argued leaves some or many Tibetan women treated well. While it is important to note that Tibetan women's treatment or standing is better in some ways than that experienced by women of other ethnic groups, activists stressed this point because it is a way to sidestep the very real problems that the activists themselves described, so as to maintain a dignified face of Tibetan society to outsiders. Thus, despite at times providing eloquent descriptions of patterns of gender-based oppression, the women's activists wanted to convey that Tibetan society is no worse than any other, and that any problematic phenomena that do exist within Tibetan society do not constitute major problems. Despite describing problematic phenomena, then, the activists were determined not to label those phenomena with the stigmatizing term 'inequality.'

Moreover, activists' descriptions of condescending or restrictive treatment of women were not followed by the indignance and opposition to these phenomena which one might typically expect from feminist discourse. For example, in his description of nuns' far fewer opportunities for religious education than the opportunities which monks receive, one activist said, "We Tibetans say people have suffered a loss, but we don't say people don't have rights" (male activist). This

activist is therefore pointedly refusing to tie the situation of nuns' lack of opportunities to an indignant, critical, or vociferous call for women's rights. Even when acknowledging unfair practices or outcomes for women, he chooses to use phrases such as 'suffering a loss' so as to avoid tying the phenomenon in question to the stigmatizing terms 'lack of rights' or 'gender inequality.'

Activists also stressed that Tibetans' treatment of women does not come from a place of deliberate cruelty. For example, one women's empowerment activist stated the following:

> Nowadays no group in the world spends more time working than Tibetan women…
> *Q:* …Is women's larger work burden a sign of gender inequality?
> *A:* No. Each nationality is different and has its own way of doing things. So it's not that women had to do most of the work because women were [deemed to be] bad. It was because traditionally food preparation was women's work and heavy labor was men's work…When it came to difficult things like hunting animals, men had to go…This was the way of life of our ethnic group. Also, for example, in the past…you had to fight wars, and it was men who fought wars…Though [women's] work was not hard, it is work you do constantly without much time off…Some people say husbands sit around, eat food, and then go out, but this is totally untrue. It's not that husbands are sitting around to deliberately make all women work. This is an opinion that is only looking at the issue from one angle. This is not a disparagement of women, but is rather the way of life of our ethnic group. (male activist)[77]

[77] In his defence of women's lack of educational opportunities, this activist further stated that "if you forcibly go and look for reasons and say this [lack of opportunities] is a sign that women are scorned, there might be things to say on that front, but…it's not that women have been deliberately denigrated. It's because traditions formed that way" (male activist).

This activist is emphasizing that women's heavy burden of labor is a product of historical circumstance, and therefore not deliberately designed to discriminate against women, and that individual Tibetans are also not actively or consciously attempting to disparage women but rather following the traditional ways handed to them by previous generations. This activist's point, therefore, is to stress that Tibetan society and people are not terrible, and in so doing he feels the need to not only refrain from vocal criticism of women's heavy burden of labor, but to counteract and deny such criticisms from others as well.

In another defense of Tibetan culture, one women's empowerment activist stated the following:

> Men are sent to school more often than women. This is not because parents are differentiating between men and women. In my village, there probably isn't anyone who commands a girl not to go to school. But in the past, Tibetan livelihood was based on the natural world, and…there wasn't a lot of industry or farming. Since men were better at struggling with nature, like taming wild animals and hunting, the impression that even if you send girls to school they won't be able to do anything has seeped into the character of all Tibetans. So a lot of women weren't sent to school. (female activist)

This is a rather convoluted argument which, by claiming parents did not 'command' women *not* to go to school, attempts to obfuscate the obvious fact that it is parents who decide whether or not to send their daughters to school, and to only send boys to school is an example of unequal treatment. However, this activist's point is that inequality is not the result of a deliberately meanspirited attempt to be cruel to women and girls. Rather, it is a less conscious product of history and tradition. By emphasizing this point, she is attempting to defend the nature of Tibetans as a people.

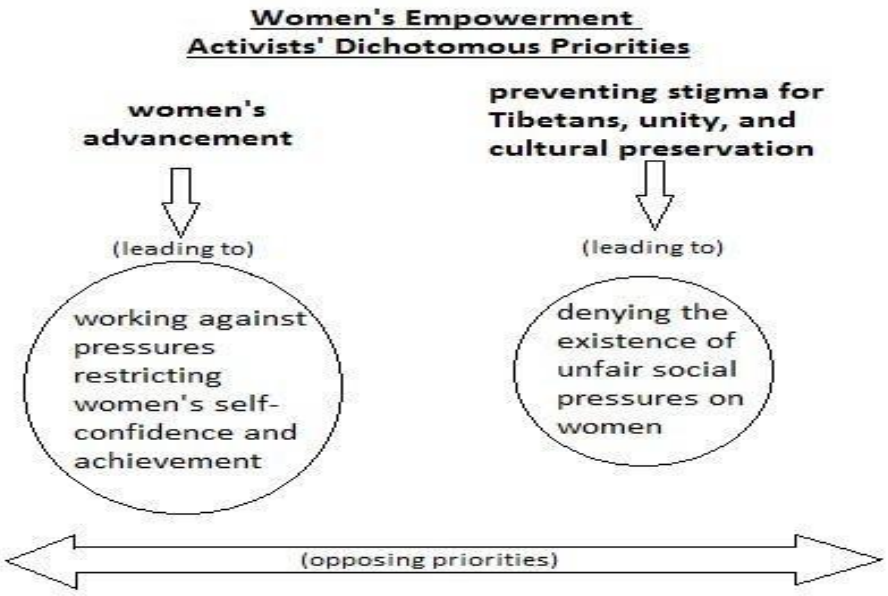
Other activists also spoke in direct contradiction to themselves, often in convoluted ways. One activist, for example, made the following statement:

> In religion, it is said that women's bodies are dirty and men's bodies are cleaner. Although at the beginning that was said to a particular person or group, I think that actually it is absolutely not the view [in religion] that women's and men's bodies have a difference in cleanliness. (male activist)

This is a curious statement, in which an assertion is directly followed by a negation of the first assertion. In this case, the activist appears to be attempting to obscure the existence of inegalitarian portrayals of women so as to defend Tibetan culture. Similarly, one women's activist said patrilocal marriage is not difficult for women because women no longer have much work to do. At another point, she said she feels sorry for rural women because they must work so hard. In this case, it appears the activist was attempting to hide her awareness of the harms caused by women's heavy burden of labor, because her aim is to sidestep and obscure the existence of this social problem.

The contradictions found within activists' accounts tend to rest on the dual but sometimes contradictory goals of women's advancement on the one hand and Tibetans' unity and cultural preservation on the other. That is, activists face the sometimes competing pressures of, on the one hand, their work to ameliorate the effects of socialization which hampers women's achievement and confidence while, on the other hand, needing to refrain from openly opposing unfair social

pressures on women so as to defend Tibetan culture and maintain social cohesion (see figure below).[78]



Thus, one activist stated she does not adhere to the opinion that women's housework burden is a matter of gender inequality, then later spoke about the problem of women's unfair burden of housework and the need for change in this regard. Denying gender inequality in housework prevents perceptions that she is attacking men and therefore maintains social cohesion. However, a reduction in women's burden of housework could allow women more time to dedicate to the goal of professional achievement.[79] This same activist first spoke of the importance of maintaining

[78] As the above-mentioned woman who has produced and distributed a video on Tibetan women's rights states, "I am only claiming rights for Tibetan women but not demanding destruction of Tibetan tradition" (Drolma, 2010). Her statement reveals the tensions and opposing forces and priorities which Tibetan women's empowerment activists must contend with.

[79] This activist may be attempting to mask her true views on the matter, as to openly call for a change in the household gender division of labor would give rise to criticism of the activist herself, and may also lead to accusations of undermining Tibetan culture. Indeed, this activist spoke of the bad reputation she has acquired due to social perceptions that she promotes feminist views.

Tibetan tradition, such that women should serve tea to others and respect men and elders. Later on, however, when I questioned her further on this point, she directly contradicted her earlier statements by arguing that women think they are too inferior and should not prioritize the clothing and food of guests and men as more important than themselves. This activist therefore first emphasized cultural preservation, but later emphasized the need for women's self-confidence. A desire to enhance women's self-confidence and achievement while at the same time preserving Tibetan tradition leads this activist to veer back and forth between positions in this way.

Similarly, while this activist argued that rights derive from women's own competence and hard work, and therefore that rights cannot be given to women, she also listed the practice of polyandrous marriage, occurring in some Tibetan areas, as a positive aspect of Tibetan culture because the women in these families are 'given' rights. "So for these people there is no reason to talk about freedom and rights. Their families give it to them and they're happy," she said (female activist). Yet this activist also argued that rights are not something which can be 'given' to women at all. Thus, this statement is in direct contradiction to her earlier argument. Despite the contradiction, however, both arguments are in line with activists' goals. The first point, that women must become successful because rights cannot be given to women, argues for women's rights in a way that focuses on women's individual achievement, therefore refraining from instigating women's conflict with men or threatening men's position in society. The second point, that some Tibetan women are given all the rights they might need or want, is attempting to emphasize that Tibetan society has no problem of gender inequality, and is therefore a statement counteracting stigma for Tibetan society.

A Representative Example

Let us look in some detail at one portion of an activist's account, as this account can be taken as a representative example displaying the various concerns of the women's empowerment activists. This activist spoke about King Songtsen Gampo, a revered figure in ancient Tibetan history. It is well-known that King Songtsen Gampo established a rule that women should not be listened to. The activist defended this ruling by arguing that, in ancient times, Tibetan women did not travel, stayed at home, and "had absolutely no opportunity to study or go outside [their home areas]" (female activist). As a result, she argued, women's lack of experience and travel made them short-sighted. Therefore, according to this activist, not listening to women was appropriate in ancient times, and is even sometimes appropriate today. This activist further argued that women's biology causes their mental inferiority to men, and that women prefer to be dependent on husbands because "Tibetan women have lazy thinking." Women's inferior mental capacities and women's inferior opinions are, according to this activist, a result of women's biology as well as of historical patterns by which Tibetan women relied on men to earn money. The conclusion of this activist's arguments is that women should stop 'having lazy thinking' and instead grasp the opportunities for study and professional work which they have recently been given; women should therefore study hard and work hard to earn money on their own.

Thus, while this activist aims to enhance women's independence and success, she also clearly believes women to be innately inferior to men. In addition, it may be important to note that this activist's arguments are factually inaccurate. Firstly, women work incredibly hard for their households. The material welfare and prosperity of a household is largely dependent on women's work. Thus butter and cheese made by women is sold for money, women are often at least partially involved in the care of livestock, a primary source of wealth for Tibetan nomads, while in some

farming areas women are considered to be better at digging for the lucrative medicinal plant known as 'caterpillar fungus,' and are therefore the individuals doing the hard labor of collecting the fungus. One might easily describe this as a situation in which household prosperity depends on women, and household men in fact depend on women. Moreover, while some of the above-mentioned activities, such as digging for caterpillar fungus, have grown increasingly common and lucrative in current times, interviewees consistently stated that certain activities, such as making butter and cheese, or weeding farming fields, have always been undertaken by women. Thus, it is rather inaccurate to claim women's material prosperity has been entirely dependent on men within Tibetan history. While men are primarily responsible for travelling to towns and cities so as to sell household products for cash, women have been significantly involved in producing those products in the first place.

Furthermore, this activist's argument that historically Tibetan women had no opportunities to study or travel appears patently false, as she herself reveals at other points in her interview. Thus, she mentioned that, in ancient times, the daughters and wives of kings and famous people had the opportunity to study. Other examples within Tibetan history of women's travel, study, involvement in politics, or even engaging in warfare are easily found. Examples of renowned female religious practitioners and teachers are many, such as A-yu Khandro, Machig Lapdron, Yeshe Tsogyal, and Nangsa Obum, some of whom studied with religious masters and also travelled widely (Allione, 2000; Diemberger, 2007; Kemmerer, 2011; Schneider, 2010). Although we must point out that many of these historical figures faced many barriers at the hands of parents, husbands, and elders who tried to restrict their freedom to undertake a religious life (Allione, 2000; Diemberger, 2007), to claim that women never had the opportunity to study or travel, and thereby learned to be lazy, intellectually weak, and dependent, is not borne out by the evidence. Moreover,

women historical figures, including those alive in the 1950s and 60s, have been involved in political intrigue and even battle, proving themselves astute and conniving in these activities, though they were not always celebrated for their feats (Diemberger, 2011; Karmay, 1998; Schneider, 2010; Van Schaik, 2011; !ཨ་བ&རྒྱ[GyayeTrabo], n.d.). Thus, a dependent and inferior mentality has by no means been universal among Tibetan women.

We might consider the above examples to be exceptional cases of unusual or unusually positioned women. However, even in the case of more ordinary women, the above-mentioned activist's argument does not seem to hold. For example, an 84-year-old interviewee of the current study spoke about independently undertaking a long and dangerous journey of pilgrimage to Lhasa when she was 20 years old, joining a group of other pilgrims for the journey and begging for food or working for rich families along the way to earn her subsistence. This interviewee said many young women travelled the way she did at the time. Moreover, the fact that the study region has a long history of banditry, tribal rivalry, and shifting political alliances (Costello, 2008; Jabb, 2009; Nietupski, 2011; Pirie, 2007, 2012), as well as poor roads and means of transport in the recent past, suggests that young men were likely to have been away from home for extended periods of time for warfare or trade. Women, then, would have potentially been left to care for all household matters with relative independence at these times. At least around the year 1958, as older interviewees and informants revealed, in some villages only women and children were left behind after men were killed and imprisoned in the fighting of the time. This would also suggest that women undertook a lot of independent responsibility for their families' livelihoods at this time.

The reasons contradictions and inaccurate assessments exist in the above-mentioned activist's account are twofold. One, King Songtsen Gampo is a highly revered figure within Tibetan history and the interviewee likely feels it unthinkable to criticize him, as to do so would be to go against

an honored and revered symbol of Tibetan civilization. Thus, she must find an argument to defend the king's rule prohibiting listening to women. Such a defense is in fact a defense of Tibetan culture and civilization. Therefore she must claim the rule is neither unfair nor unjust even though it is clearly inegalitarian. Secondly, this interviewee's adherence to beliefs that women are mentally and emotionally inferior to men is strong and therefore colors her assessment of Tibetan society and history. Such beliefs can easily reinforce the tendency, found among the other activists as well, to individualize the problem of women's low status such that a lack of rights is deemed to result from the faults of individual women rather than from larger societal structures. This activist's views, then, are representative of the main themes emerging from the group of women's empowerment activists, in that she does not adhere to a strong feminist ethic, believes opportunities and esteem for women are a product of modern times and modern forces, blames women for their own disempowerment, is intent on defending Tibetan tradition and culture, but is also intent on promoting the value that women grasp educational and professional opportunities and become successful in these spheres.

Conclusion

While the women's activists draw on a Chinese discursive environment to understand and respond to the problems they apprehend within Tibetan society, their objectives are not entirely unique. As described by Dawa Lokyitsang, for example, Tibetans' advocacy for women's empowerment in exile in India has until recently been characterized by a focus upon access to educational opportunities and development of skills while largely ignoring issues such as violence against women (2014). Moreover, the ideas espoused by the activists bear similarities to global discourses

(often termed 'neoliberal') which frame individual economic success as contingent on the development of professional skills and flexible responses to shifting economic environments. These discourses can have the effect of masking the disadvantages of broader structural factors such as race and class, as well as the vulnerabilities brought about by a fluid and changing economic landscape (Freeman, 2007; Roberts & Mahtani, 2010).

Along the same lines, the women's empowerment activists of the current study mask the existence of broader social patterns of gender-based oppression by contending that women's status is a product of individuals' capabilities alone. They describe a social environment in which gender-based oppression is alive and well, but do not express indignance towards this context. In response to my questions, the activists described and explained problems of gender inequality inherent in social norms and practices. Yet they were not particularly concerned with dismissive or belittling treatment of women. This is not surprising, since the activists' primary aim is *not* improving the treatment of women, but rather strengthening the Tibetan nationality. For the activists, this strengthening is to be achieved by enhancing the prominence and professional success of women, while at the same time refraining from actions that may cause conflict with men, disrupt community unity, change women's household roles, or threaten men's position in society. Rather than criticize a social environment that serves to dampen women's confidence, therefore, the activists prefer to refrain from criticizing society at large, while at the same time instructing women and girls to believe in themselves more. They therefore are active in attempts to improve the prominence, educational opportunities, and self-confidence of Tibetan women and girls, but do not support open complaint or vocal calls for change.

The late Qing and early Republican-era reformers described above were operating during a time of national crisis. The overwhelming issues at hand, for the reformers, were pressures which had

"helped weaken China and expose it to the danger of enslavement by global colonizing forces" (Hershatter, 2004, p. 1029). Similarly, the women's empowerment activists of the current study express a sense of crisis in which Tibetans, as an identifiable and distinct ethnic group claiming a living culture, living traditions, and a proud history, face the danger of obliteration. Therefore, like the Chinese reformers of an earlier era, they subordinate feminist priorities in order to emphasize the task of strengthening the nationality. In the process, they draw upon state discourses of individual discipline, modernity, and civilization to argue for a conception of women's rights that individualizes women's low status, framing it as a reflection of individual women's own capacities. For the activists, the paramount objective is strengthening the nationality, rendering their conception of women's rights both limited in scope and victim-blaming in thrust.

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CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored various aspects of domestic abuse on the northeastern Tibetan plateau. The pages above first discussed the uncomfortable ethical questions raised by transnational feminist research, and proposed ways to ethically engage with the power inequalities and misunderstandings commonly arising in this type of work. We next turned to the question of whether or not U.S. domestic violence (DV) theory is appropriate to the study setting, and which additional lenses are required for accurate theorising. Systems theory as it has been applied to the family and the notion of social fields were proposed as lenses that should be added to that of coercive control. The thesis then moved to the impact of household marital form on women's vulnerability to domestic violence. The wide diversity of household form in this region was described, and we saw that typical patrilocal marriage places women in the most vulnerable position, relative to other forms. This was followed by an analysis of local definitions of abuse, focusing in particular on the experiences of women victims. Women did not always feel wronged when beaten by their husbands, even at times when beatings were severe. Instead, they tended to find beatings both more acceptable and less traumatising when the perceived rationale for beating fell in line with widely expressed social norms. Finally, the thesis turned to Tibetan women's empowerment activists, exploring their vision for women's liberation. As it turned out, local visions of 'women's empowerment' were more concerned with addressing issues of Tibetans' underprivileged status as an ethnic minority in China than with enhancing women's welfare.

While most of the articles included here have already been published, in retrospect, I would have preferred to edit, modify, or elaborate upon certain sections. I have not done so in the above pages, as I opted to keep the thesis articles identical to the published versions. At this point, however, I wish to add some thoughts and explanations, particularly with regards to the final three articles, in order to clarify points which may not have been adequately highlighted in the published papers. Each section below begins with an abstract of the relevant article, to aid readers in their memory. Each abstract is then followed by my elaborations and additions to the published content.

Article 3: The Impact of Household Form and Marital Residence on the Economic Dimensions of Women's Vulnerability to Domestic Violence

Abstract: This study draws on 52 in-depth interviews and participant observation conducted on the northeastern edge of the Tibetan plateau between May 2012 and August 2013. Women's domestic violence vulnerability is assessed, looking particularly at various types of marital and decision-making arrangements within households. Different forms of extended family living arrangements and abuse by women's in-laws emerge as crucial sites of analysis. This study adds to current knowledge by discussing the specific impact of household marital form on domestic violence, a topic that is under-addressed within domestic violence research. Matrilocal arrangements can offer the best protection to women while patrilocal arrangements put women in a position of greatest vulnerability. Women's vulnerability in patrilocal marriage hinges on their land-based material constraints, their social isolation, and women's low status vis-a-vis husbands and in-laws. However, various sites of vulnerability exist in all marital forms, including within a third marital arrangement, here termed marrying 'in the middle'. The study findings contribute knowledge regarding the economic dimensions of women's vulnerability in a developing country setting. The study findings are largely in line with both the imbalance theory of domestic violence and the emphasis on women's fall-back position found within theories of household bargaining power.

Firstly, one of the main contributions of this article lies in its descriptions of the wide variety of household and marriage arrangements found in this region. As discussed in the article, the prototypical form of patrilocal or matrilocal marriage involved a young couple and their children living with the husband's parents or the wife's parents, respectively, and often with sisters or

brothers of the husband or wife as well. However, many marriages were designated as 'matrilocal' or 'patrilocal,' but involved couples living separately from in-laws, in a nuclear family arrangement. We might assume such couples in effect face circumstances similar to those married 'in the middle'. Yet such an assumption is not entirely accurate. Despite the fact that these couples live separately from in-laws, if the marriage is designated as patrilocal or matrilocal in nature, extended family members may have significant influence over the couple's decisions, while parents can expect primary care and support from the couple, if and when such support is needed.

The study sites are home to other forms of fluid household arrangements as well. In one case, described in the article, a woman was officially designated as patrilocally married, but for many years lived away from her husband, as she was her parents' only child and needed to stay in her natal home to take care of them. She thus spent many years taking care of her parents, raising her son, and managing her household on her own, and only moved in with her husband and his family once her son became old enough to take over the household's management. Such wide variation in household arrangements makes the study region a fascinating case study, and as a result, the article is novel in the data it presents.

This variety of household arrangements, moreover, allows us to conceive of bargaining power as a fluid resource, one that changes with the shifting responses of households to the contingencies of unexpected circumstances. Thus, while the prototypical or ideal scenario is one in which young women are patrilocally married, and men, especially senior men, manage household decisions and finances, these ideals were in no way universally followed. How and why

variation occurs, then, is one of the contributions of this article, a contribution I should have stressed in a more explicit way.

Secondly, readers might wonder what is especially surprising or innovative about the assertion that prototypical matrilocal marriages are most protective for women, while prototypical patrilocal marriages cause the greatest vulnerability. Firstly, this finding is rarely found in the DV literature. Michalski's review, which I draw upon in the article, lists only three works on the effects of patrilocal versus matrilocal marriage. The findings of these works are speculative conclusions derived from literature on disparate settings, or refer to groups engaging in only one form of marriage (2004). In other words, Michalski's review collects anecdotal data from various anthropological sources to arrive at suppositions. My article confirms these suppositions with evidence on *both* patrilocal and matrilocal marriage occurring in the same region and time period. My article is additionally distinct in that it is based on research directly into questions of DV and women's household status, rather than deriving from more general ethnographic observations of social life.[80]

Readers might wonder whether parallels exist between matrilocal marriage in the Tibetan setting and the anthropological literature on matrilineal societies. Nongbri'a 1980s study of the Khasi in India, for example, shows that property in this community is primarily inherited by the youngest daughter, matrilocal marriage is prevalent, and mothers are valorised as the providers of life and

[80] In her study of the Nagovisi in Papua New Guinea, for example, Nash describes a matrilineal society in which the crime of rape is nonexistent, a high level of equality between men and women is found, and women and men are understood to fluidly adopt masculine or feminine roles, switching between one type of role or the other, in accord with the requirements of the social setting (Nash, 1987). We might assume that women's control over household property in this setting, in addition to norms of relative gender equality, should place women in a position of power and low vulnerability for DV. However, Nash does not directly research DV, and any extrapolations made from her study are suppositions derived from the general picture of gender roles in society, rather than an in-depth exploration of DV cases.

lineage, while fathers are seen as relatively irrelevant in this regard. However, despite matrilineality and matrilocality, Nongbri reports that Khasi women are excluded from political and public domains, are derided or equated with children if they attempt to participate in these domains, and fall under a heavy burden of labour, as men are treated leniently when they ignore their household responsibilities, unlike women. Women's sexuality is seen as dangerous, men who are 'too' attached to female partners are considered weak, and "[d]aughters in particular should be chaste, obedient, polite and virtuous" (Nongbri, 1993, p. 179). Moreover, power and decision-making in the household falls primarily to the mother's brother, rather than to mothers or daughters. As a result, "[t]he rights and privileges of women in Khasi matriliny turn out to be mere burdensome duties and responsibilities" (1993, p. 181).

The Khasi, then, are similar to Tibetans in the study region, in that gender norms primarily favouring men can be combined with matrilocal living arrangements. Despite strong social pressures subordinating Khasi women to men, however, men still faced a predictable set of disadvantages on account of the fact that they marry matrilocally. As Nongbri states, "As a husband (*u shongkha*) a man is regarded as another family's son (*u khun ki briew*) who would have to prove his worth in his wife's house. When he becomes a father his position improves somewhat but he continues to remain an outsider" (1993, p. 183). Men in this setting, then, take on some of the vulnerabilities faced by patrilocally married women in other settings. Despite the advantages accruing to men from unequal gender norms, therefore, marrying into another's household still presents men with particular disadvantages. This evidence suggests that extended family living arrangements are likely to disadvantage new household entrants who are not blood relatives, whether male or female. This aspect of extended family households may be found in a variety of settings, despite diversity of cultural practices and norms.

On the other hand, we saw in this article that unequal gender norms and beliefs create sites of vulnerability for Tibetan women in *any* household arrangement. Thus, young women cannot entirely escape their gender-based vulnerability, though they can mitigate it via prototypical matrilocal marriage. Let us remember, however, that non-typical matrilocal marriage, such as when a couple marries matrilocally but lives separately from in-laws, can at times *increase* women's vulnerability. If a woman and her family have power over household decisions, such that the husband feels he has been disempowered, he may respond to his sense of emasculation by becoming controlling towards his wife, in line with the imbalance theory. A matrilocally married woman who lives separately from in-laws cannot rely on her parents to intervene and stop violence as it occurs. Her isolation in a nuclear family living arrangement is one site of vulnerability. Another site of vulnerability lies in the fact that her family may have more power than her husband in her household's decisions, thus potentially causing her husband to feel emasculated. As the latter may trigger DV, on the basis of the imbalance theory, (atypically) matrilocally married women may be doubly vulnerable.

It would have been advantageous to readers if I had clarified how much power young women in the study setting can employ in service of choosing their own type of marriage. In line with social pressures on young women to comport themselves with relative silence and obedience in the household, described in the thesis Introduction, interviewees also described young women as having little choice or say in arranged marriages. That is, I was told that young men are asked their opinion before parents decide on a wife for their son, while women are not given as much of a choice. Tibetan language articles and popular songs also refer to women's fate as one of lack of freedom in marriage ("གཞོན་པའི་སེམས། [The Minds of Youth]," n.d.; དཔལ་མོ།[Huamo], 2011). On the other hand, however, choice in marriage, for both young men and women, is described as

having increased quite a lot in current times ("གཞོན་པའི་སེམས། [The Minds of Youth]," n.d.).[81] While these depictions refer to *who* a young person marries, they do not discuss whether or not young women can affect the type of marriage (patrilocal, matrilocal, neolocal) they enter into.

In interviewees' accounts, decisions on type of marriage were often described as a matter of negotiation between a woman's parents, the woman's husband-to-be, and his parents. The fact that women's own concerns are not often described as salient may result from young men's stronger feelings on the matter, as men often face social stigma and shame if they marry matrilocally. Parents are another group who are likely to have strong views, as they may wish to be taken care of in their old age by a daughter, or to keep a daughter living with or near themselves. In one case, however, a woman's patrilocal marriage was arranged by her parents. On the day that her parents sent her away to her new husband's home, the woman cried a lot and did not want to leave, but her parents compelled her to go. Her husband's home was located in the same village as her own. Though not mistreated by her in-laws, the woman repeatedly ran away to her parents, was sent back to her husband's home, then ran away again, in a repetitive cycle. Eventually, both the woman's parents and her husband's family felt they had no choice but to accept her wishes. As a result, the marriage was ended, and the woman's parents later arranged a matrilocal marriage for their daughter. The picture that emerges from the study data, therefore, is one in which many young women accept that they are likely to marry patrilocally, and that this is the normal future for most women. Young men and elder generations may have stronger views, however, and may push harder for their preferred type of marriage. It appears

[81] One interviewee said that within her lifetime social interactions had changed from a time when women would simply be given away in marriage, and they would not be asked their opinions on the matter (though young men were asked), to the pattern of life now, when you can no longer arrange the younger generation's marriage without obtaining their consent.

young women are at times pressured or pushed into leaving their natal homes to marry into another household. In these cases, extreme measures may be required if the woman is to successfully insist on another type of marriage.

Finally, it may have been advantageous in this article to briefly note that bargaining power is not the only avenue through which women's household status may be tied to economic arrangements. Boserup, for example, argues moves away from elders' power over the younger generation and men's power over women is connected to shifts away from household-based subsistence and towards more industrialised and specialised economic production. For Boserup, this reduction in elders' and men's power over others in the home is not exactly a function of women's independently-earned income or fall-back position. It is rather a function of economic considerations applying to the entire household unit and of wider institutional pressures (Boserup, 1990). In the article, it may have been useful to briefly mention such alternative theories.

Article 4: When Wife-Beating is Not Necessarily Abuse

Abstract: This paper describes the views of Tibetan women who have experienced physical violence from male intimate partners. How they conceptualise abuse, 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.

In this article, readers may have benefitted from a longer description of the gender and social norms prevalent in the region. While these norms are described in the thesis Introduction (in Part 3: Context of Gender Relations in the Study Region), here I add some additional descriptions to aid readers in understanding the full social context behind the views discussed in this article.

In the thesis Introduction, we saw that women are often under significant social pressure to remain relatively silent, as they are believed to have a tendency for gossip and unnecessary criticism of others. Women are stereotyped not only as having 'small minds' and relatively irrational thinking, their words are also often considered to lend easily towards interpersonal conflict. It would seem, then, that according to these ideas, for wider group harmony the danger of women's speech must be contained.

It may not be surprising, given this context, that violence between husbands and wives is often triggered by the wife expressing anger at mistreatment or responding with angry words when provoked. Such feminine expressions of anger may not only upset the normative household hierarchy, in which women are meant to be subservient to husbands, but may also be seen as representative of the dangers of women's speech in general.

As Raheja observes, in rural parts of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, negative stereotypes of women are deployed towards the maintenance of household hierarchies. "[D]evaluations of female sexuality," common in "textual traditions...[and] in everyday speech," can be used "to limit the effects that strong conjugal bonds would have on the power of senior over junior men, the power of men over women, and the power of older women over younger brides," she states (Raheja, 1994, p. 73). That is, household members may attempt to restrict a new bride and prevent the formation of strong ties between herself and her husband so as to maintain established household hierarchies, as this would allow the overall household unit to continue in a recognisable form. Similarly, in the study region, silencing pressures on women may be deployed to reinforce women's subservience to higher-status family members, thereby

maintaining conventional household hierarchies, themselves underscored by powerful ideas around women's irrationality and men's competence.

Indeed, like the 'harms' of women's excessive speech and disobedience towards husbands, a breakdown of hierarchy between elders and the younger generation is likely also viewed as dangerous, as this may be seen as threatening household unity and the proper care and respect which is the right of elders. Thus, in some cases wife-beating occurred when a mother-in-law told her son that her daughter-in-law was disobedient or talked back. In these cases, the son heard his mother's complaints, then hit his wife to punish her for stepping out of the bounds of her 'proper' role. In so doing, the husband in these cases was also undertaking his 'proper' role, by listening to his mother, an elder, and taking his mother's side.

Women who hit their husbands, or who react to a beating by hitting back, were listed by some interviewees as shameful in their conduct.[82] Once again, behaviour considered shameful or in need of punishment is that which contradicts conventional notions of household hierarchy. As men's hitting of wives does not contradict this hierarchy, often this hitting is not itself considered noteworthy. Rather, the underlying conflict which started the argument and hitting is considered the 'real' problem. When asked what respondents would do if a close friend or family member were experiencing DV, interviewees frequently responded that they would look into whether the husband was to blame, or whether instead the wife was to blame. By questioning who is to blame, interviewees were questioning the circumstances of the underlying argument giving rise to hitting, seen as potentially either party's fault. In this view, violence does not automatically

[82] Some also stated only Han Chinese women hit their husbands, as Tibetan women would not act this way.

make the man to blame, nor is it considered exceptional and problematic unless it reaches a relatively high level of severity.

Preventing divorce and reconciling couples, furthermore, is almost always considered the best-case scenario. By asking whether the husband or wife is the one at fault, interviewees were in fact asking which party they should scold or lecture, i.e. who they should urge to change behaviour or thinking so that the conflict does not re-occur. Interviewees often spoke disparagingly about those with an interest in encouraging family break-up. The type of response to couple conflict typically considered 'positive' or 'proper', then, is to strive to reconcile the couple, prevent divorce, and maintain a harmonious marriage. As noted above, hitting is considered to be of secondary import, unless it reaches a certain level of severity. As a result, those deemed to react 'excessively' to couple conflict and hitting, are viewed at times unfavourably. As one interviewee stated, "it is shameful for women if they are deemed to escape their husbands' homes [by going to their natal homes] too often" (monk, possibly early 50s).

While one or other party may be identified as primarily at fault for a couple's conflicts, the process of reconciling couples usually involves urging both of them to contain their anger, so as to prevent future conflicts. This practice reflects patterns of conflict mediation seen outside of the household context as well. For example, according to one village leader I interviewed, a good mediator is someone who does not take sides, but blames both parties to a conflict equally. As this interviewee stated:

> [If two families or two villages are fighting,] I tell the conflicting parties to stay quiet, and I will decide on the matter. If they are fighting over land...one party says their piece and then the other says theirs....Then I tell them to go home and I'll decide, and then all

> the village leaders discuss the matter with each other. Then we don't go with what either party said. Even if we make the wrong decision, we don't side with either party and we treat everyone the same. They have to accept the village leaders' decision, whether they have won [land] or have suffered a loss. I decide by treating everyone the same, and [the conflicting parties] cannot complain anymore [once the decision has been made]. *This is the moral path*. (man, urbanised nomad, age 60, emphasis mine)

In the quote above, the interviewee appears to believe that the only way to be a fair and unbiased intervener is to treat both parties to a conflict as equally to blame, or deserving of equal land or compensation. A similar reaction is frequently seen in DV, such that both parties are lectured to refrain from argument, and both parties are considered at least partially to blame. This reaction to DV, then, is not entirely gendered, but is in part the product of broader notions around how mediators should react to any kind of conflict.

In fact, in order to fully understand the beliefs expressed by the women in this article, we may need to recognise that women's views were underpinned by some prevalent conceptions that are not entirely gendered. As my participant observation data and interview statements attest, a good person is frequently considered to be an individual who refrains from much complaint and does not easily take offence, especially over small or mundane matters. A prevalent logic around 'good' or 'proper' human relationships, then, requires individuals to have the ability to easily forget about others' dismissive or condescending words, and the capacity to bear unfortunate circumstances without much complaint. We might see this as a logic of selflessness, such that individuals should not focus too much on their own personal grievances. These norms likely impacted women's statements, by pushing them to be as forgiving as possible towards their

husbands and mothers-in-law. While pressures on women to refrain from conflict or voicing anger are clearly gendered, the above-mentioned logic of selflessness in 'good' human relationships applies generally to both women and men. That is, a certain selflessness in interpersonal interactions is required of everyone. In the article, I discuss and reject the notion of 'adaptive preferences' as an adequate explanation for Tibetan women's views. In retrospect, a discussion of the selflessness inherent in prevalent visions of 'good' interpersonal relations would have been a useful point to add to this discussion. Such visions are an important factor behind women's views in this setting.

An additional point of note is the heavy burden of labour patrilocally married women often face in this region. A more extensive discussion of common practices and trends relating to women's labour may have been useful in the article, as beating of wives sometimes revolved around issues of women's labour contributions to their household. Let us, then, briefly turn to an explanation of patterns around women's household labour burden.

In the study region, a number of accounts suggest women are under pressure to work diligently and conscientiously in their household duties. For example, a popular folk tale composed of life lessons for lay men and women instructs young men to care for and respect and listen to their parents, to respect the elderly, to not be conceited, and to not lie. For young women, on the other hand, the instructions emphasise hard work, and women are told not to gossip, to be gentle of character, and to be polite and courteous to guests (<<མང་ཚོགས་སྐྱུ་རྩལ་>>རྩོམ་སྒྲིག་ལང་། [EditorialBoardOfFolkArts], n.d.). In addition, women's underperformance of household labour was listed by a number of interviewees as circumstances under which wife-beating is relatively acceptable. According to one interviewee, for example, beating is deserved "if the

woman...doesn't cook for her husband and [goes out to have fun and] doesn't come home for an entire day" (woman, urban resident, likely 30s).

In more extreme cases, women's household labour burden can be excessively onerous. Interviewees spoke, for example, of women who work all day long while men relax more and sleep more. Some spoke of women working such long hours that they can obtain only a few hours of sleep each night[83] [84]. Others spoke of health problems which women suffer because they have worked too hard or have lacked sufficient rest when menstruating, when pregnant, or in the aftermath of childbirth. Some interviewees even spoke of women being treated like servants or treated as if they only exist to undertake labour.

The household labour expected from women can restrict their mobility and freedom to socialise. Thus, interviewees spoke of the bad reputations women acquire if they ride motorcycles or are seen to be spending too much time in town, thus neglecting responsibilities towards their rural households. Festival days are also times when young married women in particular are less likely than others to attend picnics or festivals, or to linger, relax, and socialise.

Pressures upon women to work with constant diligence, especially in patrilocal households, can serve the material prosperity of the household quite well. According to one interviewee, for

[83] This is particularly the case in the summer season when the work is especially busy, and was also particularly the case in the past when automated devices and merchandise for purchase were not especially accessible.
[84] Some of the women's empowerment activists made a point of arguing that women only work more often and longer hours than men because many of the men's traditional roles, such as herding animals to pastures far away or banditry or warfare, are no longer necessary in the current social and political environment. In particular, policies of establishing fences on pastureland and thereby delineating the private land holdings of each family has meant that in many areas men can no longer travel far from their homes to herd livestock, significantly reducing the amount of time they spend on this activity.

example, a few years of marriage under the harsh treatment of her mother-in-law was enough to make her able to complete a large amount of work quickly and efficiently.

Finally, this article discusses 'deep listening' as a method of qualitative research. It would have been useful to discuss similar methodological approaches proposed by other scholars. These scholars assert that ways of conceptualising social phenomena do not always follow researchers' assumptions, nor do styles of communication. Many writers have thus questioned the pervasiveness of hegemonic epistemologies in academic work, government policies, and international aid. Prominent academic theories are often very individualistic in their conception of social actors. This is problematic, as such a conception is alien to ways of living and understanding identity in certain contexts. In response to these problems, researchers have prioritised "locally emergent notions of space, time and spirituality" when engaging with research participants, have used local elders' conceptualisations as the starting point of their research inquiry, or in one case, began a joint research project with "an intensive learning period," in which parties laboured to become versed in each other's culture (Fennell & Arnot, 2008, p. 536).

Similarly, when investigating the topic of divorce, Riessman came to the realisation that interviewees were resisting her attempts to contain their stories. “I realized that participants were resisting our efforts to fragment their experiences into thematic (codable) categories – our attempts, in effect, to control meaning,” she states (2002, p. 695). Riessman describes how, in some cases, researchers and interviewees did not share norms regarding how to explain or make a point. An absence of shared norms, often occurring in cross-cultural interactions, can result in researchers missing the most crucial points in a narrator’s story. While some communication

styles place events in chronological order, a more “episodic” communication style is characterised by “time, place, and characters shift[ing]...[A]n important overall theme [is] developed by seemingly distinct episodes. The connections between the individual episodes must be inferred by the listener” (Riessman, 1991, p. 224). In her interviews, Riessman first attempted to fit informants' narratives into a chronological structure, before she eventually discovered her informants were attempting to stress ideas she did not at first comprehend.

The scholars listed above stress the importance of decentering and undermining ingrained patterns by which hegemonic, often Western, epistemologies are not only pervasive, but difficult to dislodge from our thinking. Their point is thus similar to my own point about 'deep listening' in this article, as researchers are called upon to fundamentally question their taken-for-granted assumptions.

Article 5: The Discourse of Tibetan Women's Empowerment Activists

Abstract: Feminist activism has played a major role in the adoption of a public understanding of domestic violence as a social problem requiring active policy responses in settings as divergent as the United States, Canada, Japan, and South Korea. In Tibetan areas of China, however, such activism does not appear to have occurred. This paper looks at a group of Tibetans termed ‘women’s empowerment activists.’ Activists’ views on Tibetan women’s rights and status are explored, in an attempt to understand why these individuals have worked to empower women, and why violence against women in Tibetan society has not been part of the focus of their work. The answer to the latter question lies in both the unique political position of Tibetan communities and in the fact that, despite the activists’ work to empower Tibetan women, the overarching concerns of the women’s empowerment activists do not exactly follow a strong feminist ethic but are more focused upon the strength of Tibetan society as a whole.

In this article, I may not have adequately clarified the professional and social positions of the women's empowerment activists. Let me make clear, then, that the activists are local Tibetan residents. They are not transnational actors, as they are not based outside of the study region, nor

to my knowledge have they ever lived outside of the region. In addition, in their activist work, the women and men described in this article are in no way operating in an official, government capacity. When undertaking activist projects, therefore, they are not tied to the Women's Federation, nor to any other government body.

The activists' social and professional positions varied. Some held full-time jobs in government or government-funded offices, some were monks or religious leaders, and some were only semi-employed, i.e. earning income on an intermittent, freelance basis. All of the activists, however, have spent their free time, outside of professional work, organising private, grassroots initiatives to help their communities. In general, the activists have not created, nor do they belong to, established organisations with NGO registration. Instead, in their free time, they solicit donations, gather friends and acquaintances together, and hold conferences, run trainings, or publish collections of women's writing. In the case of one activist who is a religious leader, he travels to various villages in his capacity as a religious teacher, and lectures villagers against treating or viewing women in a condescending manner. In the case of one activist, he started two private schools, one for boys and one for girls, that have grown into established institutions.

A second point of note which I wish to add to this article relates to the question of feminist activism elsewhere in China. For example, several women's rights NGOs working on the issue of DV are found in Beijing (de Silva de Alwis & Klugman, 2015). Young women's feminist activism in Beijing and other sites in inner China has also recently garnered attention on social media (See Appendix 5). However, the Tibetan activists described in this article are not, to my knowledge, tied to these Chinese movements. Two of the activists have received donations from supporters in inner China, revealing some wider links to people and to networks elsewhere in the

country. On the whole, however, the projects of the Tibetan activists are local initiatives, based upon concerns specific to Tibetan communities. I therefore do not have reason to believe the Tibetan women's empowerment activists are strongly influenced, or influenced at all, by feminist movements further inland.

However, as described in the article, the activists appear heavily influenced by general Chinese state and popular discourse. In the article, I thus described Republican-era reformers' views, in order to show that some of the activists' conceptions are deeply Chinese. In fact, in China, a belief that women's emancipation is a requirement for national strength did not end with the Republican era. Instead, strands of this style of thinking have continued into the present. China has thus promoted an image of itself as socialist and modern, with women's equality portrayed as fundamental to the country's progress and national sovereignty (Schaffer & Xianlin, 2007). For the Tibetan activists, it seems, this logic of tying women's emancipation to national strength is a taken-for-granted reality. The fact that activists draw so heavily on state discourse and on a discursive tradition founded in recent Chinese history may be surprising, given the importance to activists of Tibetan cultural preservation. However, for the activists, striving for women's professional success, as a means to obtain strength and resilience for Tibetans at large, is necessary in the current social and economic environment.

When discussing broader discourses of *suzhi*, this article once again showed that Tibetan activists draw heavily from the wider Chinese discursive environment, despite their strong interest in preserving Tibetan culture at the same time. Discussing *suzhi* discourse in this article was also a way of illustrating the link between Tibetan activists' aims and global neoliberal discourses, a point I mention in the article's conclusion. This article shows, therefore, that Tibetan activists

draw heavily on neoliberal ideas, refracted through the lens of Chinese national neoliberal discourse, or *suzhi*.

In this article, it may have been useful to compare the discourse of Tibetan women's empowerment activists with other non-Western or postcolonial strands of feminism. According to Badran, for example, throughout the twentieth century, "Women at diverse locations in the Middle East sustained their independent activist commitment to the dual liberation of the nation and women...as their countries moved further away from foreign rule and its remnants" (2005, p. 8). Here, we see feminist movements which tied the national struggle for liberation with women's liberation. However, Badran does not describe these movements as ones which considered women's emancipation necessary *for* the nation's strength. Rather, the women Badran refers to intended to work both towards feminist and nationalist goals at the same time. Thus, the Middle Eastern feminists Badran refers to do not really reflect the discourse of the Tibetan women's empowerment activists, or for that matter, the discourse of Chinese Republican-era reformers.

Badran and others (Afshar, 2007; Badran, 2005; Seedat, 2013) also describe the philosophical contents of 'Islamic feminism', an ideology which emerged in the Middle East in the 1990s as a reaction to religious movements calling for a return of women to the home and to 'traditional' patriarchy. Islamic feminists tend to rely on in-depth readings of Islamic texts and history to argue that oppression of women is often the product of an adulterated form of Islam, such that the original intent of the religious texts and of the Prophet have been corrupted (Afshar, 2007; Badran, 2005; Hassan, 1999; Seedat, 2013). The Tibetan activists described in this article diverge from the patterns seen within such strands of feminism, as the Tibetan activists do not

attempt to re-assess prevalent notions of femininity or of women's role. Instead, they fully endorse a reified conception of tradition in which women must serve others and refrain from conflict in the home. They are thus uninterested in re-assessing common stereotypes of women and prevalent norms around gender roles. Once again, the Tibetan activists do not show strong similarities to strands of feminism found elsewhere.

It may be worth noting that contemporary versions of Chinese feminism, as seen in women's historical, fictional, autobiographical, and semi-autobiographical writings, have attempted to reclaim the image of powerful women in history and myth, by "reconstruct[ing] representations of [these] women in opposition to established versions " (Schaffer & Xianlin, 2007, p. 21). Contemporary women's writings also contain "critique[s] of Chinese masculinity" (2007, p. 19); include collections of women's experiences and life stories, which "call attention to women's rights issues and spur advocacy" (2007, p. 21); and involve attempts to discover particularly feminine forms of subjectivity and aesthetics (Schaffer & Xianlin, 2007). The Tibetan activists, at least in the expressions they relayed to me through our interviews, are much less focused on reclaiming femininity in such a holistic way. Instead of attempting to formulate a new style of femininity which can move beyond rigid restrictions and stereotypes, the Tibetan activists tended to endorse stereotypical views. Unlike the Han Chinese writers mentioned above, then, an attempt to reclaim varied and expanded possibilities for femininity did not appear in the accounts of the Tibetan activists. Of course, this article was not a study of Tibetan women's art or literature. As I mention in Article 1 (*The Ethics of Transnational Feminist Research and Activism*), Tibetan poetry appears to contain some of the most poignant depictions of gender inequality. Thus, an exploration of Tibetan women's artistic expression may reveal a more

prototypically 'feminist' consciousness in the study region. The accounts of the activists described in this article, however, do not follow this line of thinking.

Indeed, as I describe in the article, the Tibetan activists do not focus on women's treatment or welfare as the central point of concern. This is a significant point of divergence between the activists I interviewed and variants of feminism found in other regions of the world (see, for example, Duarte, 2012; Heo, 2010; Mani, 1990).

Finally, much has been written about tensions between prioritising gender equality on the one hand, and cultural preservation, such that communities refrain from becoming excessively 'Westernised', on the other. The two priorities are not necessarily oppositional and some would argue both can be achieved at the same time. For example, Islamic feminists and feminist theologians sometimes argue it is in fact a return to authentic and unadulterated forms of religious practice that is emancipatory for women (Hassan, 1999; Koppedrayer, 2007). Moreover, as Badran points out, in the case of Middle Eastern feminisms, many of these feminist ideologies are locally derived, a product of locally embedded history and practices. Thus, accusations that feminism in this setting is 'Western' are in fact erroneous (2005). In the case of the Tibetan activists in this article, however, the force of priority was clearly weighted towards cultural preservation, with women's rights or equality entirely subordinated in favour of this goal.[85]

[85] Article 1 (*The Ethics of Transnational Feminist Research and Activism*) deals further with this question of the potential and actual tensions between gender equality and cultural preservation, and addresses the varied literature discussing this topic (see in particular the following sections of Article 1: 'Recognising the fluidity of culture,' 'Questioning a focus on consent and choice,' and the second to last paragraph in 'Marginalisation in feminist spaces').

Reflections

One consistent theme arising throughout this thesis is the problematic nature of Western scholarly assumptions when these are applied to the study setting. The thesis describes, for example, how different forms of marriage affect women's household bargaining power and fall-back position. DV literature tends to ignore these issues, instead conceptualising domestic abuse as occurring only in nuclear family households. This is an assumption that cannot hold in many non-Western settings. In addition, while Euro-American scholarly work on DV assumes any physical violence is automatically abusive, this is counter to the perspectives of women victims. Further assumptions of scholarly literature that prove erroneous in the study setting include the view that individuals always act autonomously of their wider families. We saw, however, that family-wide decision-making sometimes takes precedence, while strong identification with natal families impacts dynamics of abuse. Women's position in their households is part of wider family and community dynamics, often involving parties other than the husband and wife. By focusing on two individual members of a couple, without addressing the particular dynamics arising from their extended families, communities, and even ethnic group, we miss some of the most salient factors affecting DV in the region. Euro-American scholarly work on DV, however, tends to zoom in on the couple dynamic.

Another consistent theme within the articles presented here is the particularly underprivileged status of the patrilocal daughter-in-law. The articles within this thesis show that patrilocally married women occupy a vulnerable position in their husbands' households, especially early in their marriage, before they raise children, and before they become mothers-in-law. We saw, for example, how a patrilocal daughter-in-law's fall-back position is extremely constrained, and how

broader gender norms can insist that daughters-in-law submit to the authority of parents-in-law and husbands. In Article 4 (*When Wife-Beating is Not Necessarily Abuse*), we also saw women's internalisation of broader social values whereby women are meant to be conciliatory and accommodating to higher-status household members such as husbands or mothers-in-law. We further saw that those local individuals most active in attempts to empower women were *not* undertaking their activist work with women's welfare primarily in mind. Instead, they reinforced women's subservience in the household and the normativity of patrilocal marriage, a form of marriage which makes women especially vulnerable to domestic abuse.

As my supervisor said early in the course of my DPhil, this project has been conducted in the context of an 'evidence desert', or a complete lack of available literature on DV as it plays out in the study region. Academic data on DV derives primarily from United States research, while Tibetan Studies literature rarely covers questions of gendered relationships in contemporary lay society. Given the paucity of work on the subject of my study, I have relied on literature from settings elsewhere in the global South, where available, and I have drawn somewhat eclectically from theoretical work to aid in comprehending the problem.

It is difficult to break from excessive Euro-American centrism in academic conceptions, as alternate ways of theorising social relations are not easily found. One means of addressing this problem is to piece together several available approaches, combining them to better comprehend the subject of research, as I have done in this thesis. I have offered a set of approaches that, taken together, form a fit-to-purpose tool-kit. This tool-kit does not constitute the monolithic type of theory Evan Stark proposes, as Stark provides us with a singular argument, marked by a discrete set of perpetrator tactics that form the hallmarks of coercive control. The set of

theoretical lenses utilised in this thesis, by contrast, form a 'clumsy solution' to the problem at hand, one that will hopefully be improved upon in future research. My tactic of drawing on a set of approaches which together can be used to better comprehend DV is most clearly seen in Article 2 (*Coercive Control, Community Embeddedness, and Family Systems*). The thesis as a whole can also be viewed as providing a conglomeration of useful lenses.

Other scholars may be willing to utilise the tools I have suggested to approach the same problems in alternate settings, adapting and further developing these tools as more studies are conducted. Perhaps this will eventually lead to more streamlined theories that are both singular in argument and appropriate to non-Western settings.

This thesis attempts to build an accurate understanding of DV in the study region, but does not concern itself primarily with solutions or interventions. Article 1 (*The Ethics of Transnational Feminist Research and Activism*) proposes some ethical means of undertaking transnational interventions, but the form and content of therapies, solutions, or activist projects in response to DV has not been proposed. I intend to use the knowledge I have gained from this research project to begin a sustained dialogue with Tibetan intellectuals, social activists, and community leaders, as I hope to collaborate with these individuals to discuss the problem of DV and discover solutions. In fact, exploring the content of appropriate solutions is the logical next step following from the research presented here.

This thesis has addressed one facet of gender-based violence in one region of the global South. The themes raised in this work, however, especially the ethical issues in Article 1, are of much wider relevance. If we cannot understand gender-based violence in ways that are appropriate cross-culturally, international development aid may be directed to relatively useless purposes,

and research and interventions around the world, whether implemented by local elites or outsiders, may prove unsuccessful in mitigating the problem or, more worryingly, may even cause damage.

Scholars like Abu-Lughod, who I critique in Article 1, appear happy to take a hands-off approach to issues of women's status in a transnational context. From my point of view, this is unfortunate, as Abu-Lughod's approach tends to justify local social structures, regardless of their content. As I argue in Article 1, we should not abandon all moral responsibility. Such responsibility cannot be realistically abandoned, in any case, as the very process of researching and portraying a group of people in one way rather than another is a political act, requiring a consideration of ethics. Some DV researchers veer in the opposite direction to Abu-Lughod's, imposing Western assumptions and understandings onto settings around the world. Some among these DV researchers uncritically adopt and apply the theory of coercive control to areas of the world very different from the United States. This risks erroneous conclusions and can be dangerous if such conclusions are used to design policy and interventions. I hope to strike a middle ground between these two poles.

The World Health Organization estimates 1 in 3 women around the world experiences DV or sexual violence (World Health Organization, 2013). A 2010 U.S. national survey found approximately 1 in 3 women suffer DV (Black et al., 2011), while a 2004-2005 U.K. survey found approximately 27% of women have experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16

(Woodhouse & Dempsey, 2016).[86] The staggering numbers of women suffering from violence and abuse in their homes worldwide reveals this issue to be a pressing global concern.

Discovering ways of approaching and mitigating this problem that can transcend cultural and regional borders, without falling into the trap of stigmatising marginalised peoples, is an endeavour with the capacity to enhance the well-being of communities and nations.

Adequately addressing DV may also have knock-on effects for those women who are not likely to be identified as victims in surveys, but who may still face low-grade emotional aggression and controlling behaviour in their family and intimate partner relationships. The potential reach, in aggregate, of work on this topic is therefore significant and positive. A fundamental step in building adequate solutions is coming to an appropriate comprehension of the problem's dynamics and scope. These pages have worked towards this end, and I hope they have made a contribution in this regard.

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Appendix 1 – Maps of the Study Region

This thesis employed interviews conducted with individuals residing in a number of farming villages, nomadic settlements, towns, and cities located on the northeastern edge of the Tibetan plateau, in Qinghai province of the PRC. Qinghai province is highlighted in the map of China below (source: www.planetware.com).



The following map shows Qinghai province alone, with the rough contours of the area covered by the current study marked in yellow outline (source: http://www.75111.com/Photo/xn/200508/392.html).



Finally, the following map shows the sites of Tibetan self-immolations as of March 2016 (source: International Campaign for Tibet, https://www.savetibet.org/resources/fact-sheets/selfimmolations-by-tibetans/map-tibetan-self-immolations-from-2009-2013/). As we can see, selfimmolations have been concentrated in many of the same areas covered by this study.



Appendix 2 – Interviewee Demographic Information

The demographic information of interviewees is listed below, in tables separating respondents into four groups: women, men, women policy actors, and men policy actors. Each interviewee's age and level of education is shown below.

The final column of each table lists the type of person interviewed. In the case of policy actors, each actor's occupation is listed. With all other interviewees (i.e. those who are not policy actors), the final column describes each individual as either a nomad, a farmer, an urbanised nomad, or an urbanised farmer. Nomads and farmers live in nomadic settlements or farming villages, respectively, and in many cases undertake nomadic or farming work as their primary occupation. The terms 'urbanised nomad' or 'urbanised farmer' refer to those individuals who come from nomadic or farming families, but who are currently residing in towns or cities. Urbanised farmers and urbanised nomads undertake a range of occupations in the towns or cities within which they reside, such as teacher, taxi driver, shopkeeper, etc.

Please note: Transcripts which received a thorough, in-depth analysis for the purposes of this thesis are highlighted in yellow.

WOMEN	**Age**	**Education**	**Nomad/Farmer/Urban resident**
	20	High school	Urbanised farmer
	22	No schooling	Nomad
	28	Middle school	Urbanised nomad
	30	Middle school	Urbanised farmer
	32	Master's degree	Urbanised farmer-cum-nomad
	33	First year of middle school	Urbanised nomad
	35	First year of middle school	Urbanised farmer (moved into tow one year ago)
	35	University	Urbanised farmer-cum-nomad

	Around 35	Second year of elementary school	Nomad
	36	University	Urbanised farmer
	37	No schooling	Farmer
	38	No education	Urbanised farmer
	Mid to la e 30s	Unknown	Urbanised nomad
	41	Likely either high sch ol or university	Urbanised farmer
	41	Likely either high sch ol or university	Unknown
	42	No schooling	Farmer
	44	Unknown	Nomad
	45	High school	Urbanised nomad
	45	Unknown	Farmer
	47	Likely no schooling	Urbanised nomad
	48	Elementary school	Nomad
	Likely 40s	University	Urbanised nomad
	51	No schooling	Urbanised farmer
	Likely late 50s	Middle school	Urbanised nomad
	60	Likely no schooling	Nomad
	65	Probably no schooling	Urbanised farmer
	82	No schooling	Urbanised nomad
	84	Probably no schooling	Urbanised nomad

	Unknown	No schooling	Urbanised nomad
	28	Middle school	Urbanised nomad
	28	No schooling	Nomad
	Probably around age 30	University	Nomad
	33	No schooling	Nomad
	36	Unknown	Nomad
	35 or 37	No schooling	Farmer

	38	Elementary school	Urbanised farmer
	40	Middle school	Urbanised nomad
	45	No schooling	Nomad
	Likely 45	No schooling	Urbanised farmer
	47	No schooling	Urbanised farmer
	47	Unknown	Nomad
	48	Middle school	Urbanised farmer
	Around 48	Likely either high school or university	Urbanised nomad
	49	No schooling	Nomad
	50	No schooling	Urbanised farmer
	51	No schooling	Urbanised farmer
	51	Unknown	Urbanised nomad
	53	No schooling	Urbanised farmer
	55	No schooling	Farmer
	58	No schooling	Urbanised farmer
	Possibly late 50s or 60s	A few years of schooling	Nomad

	Around 60	No schooling	Nomad
	63	Likely no schooling	Nomad
	65	No schooling	Nomad
	Likely 60s	No schooling	Urbanised farmer
	70	Unknown	Farmer
	Likely 80s	No schooling	Nomad
	Unknown	No schooling	Nomad
	Unknown	Likely elementary school	Urbanised nomad
	Unknown	University	Urbanised farmer
	Unknown	Unknown	Urbanised farmer

MEN	**Age**	**Education**	**Nomad/Farmer/Urban resident**
	25	Middle schoo	Urbanised nomad
	27	Middle schoo	Urbanised farmer
	28	University	Farmer
	30	Middle schoo	Nomad
	31	Middle schoo	Farmer
	31	Middle schoo	Urbanised farmer
	34	No schooling	Nomad
	34	Second year of university	Urbanised farmer
	34	Second year of university	Urbanised nomad
	29	Middle school	Urbanised nomad
	29	University	Farmer
	32	High school	Nomad

	37	Second year of university	Nomad
	38	No schooling	Nomad
	38	Second year of university	Urbanised nomad

WOMEN POLICY ACTORS	**Age**	**Education**	**Type of policy actor**
	28	Monastic education	Women's empowerment activist (nun)
	37	Likely university	Local government leader
	Likely 30s	Master's degree	Women's empowerment activist (NGO worker)
	Likely late 30s	University	Women's empowerment activist (government employee)
	45	University	Women's empowerment activist (teacher)
	Likely 40s	Likely university	Leader in the Women's Federation
	Likely 40s or 50s	Likely PhD	Women's empowerment activist (teacher)
	50	Elementary school	Leader in the Women's Federation
	70	University	Leader in a health care service provision capacity
	Unknown	Likely university	Leader in a health care service provision capacity
	29	University	Women's empowerment activist (student)

	29	Likely university	Women's empowerment activist (probably a government employee)
	Likely 30 s	Master's degree	Women's empowerment activist (NGO worker)
	Likely 40 s or 50s	High school	Women's empowerment activist (government employee)
	Unknown	Likely university	Leader in the Women's Federation

MEN POLICY ACTORS	**Age**	**Education**	**Type of policy actor**
	35	University	Police officer
	Likely 40s	Unknown	Lawyer
	Likely 40s	Unknown	Lawyer
	58	No schooling	Village leader
	Likely 50s	Monastic education	Women's empowerment activist (monk)
	Likely 50s	Unknown	Women's empowerment activist (monk)
	60	Likely elementary school	Village leader
	Unknown	Unknown	Women's empowerment activist (religious leader)
	36	No schooling, but informally educated	Women's empowerment activist (NGO worker)

Appendix 3 - Interview Topic Guide

As this study employed unstructured, narrative interviews, the research assistants and I did not adhere to a singular or structured set of interview questions. Instead, the specific questions we asked often varied from interview to interview. However, the assistants and I used a topic guide, with suggested questions that we could choose to ask if and when relevant. The topic guide for women and men interviewees, and the guide for policy actors, are both listed below. While the guides expanded as fieldwork progressed, and as new topics of interest emerged, a basic version of each guide is listed below.

The most valuable questions are likely not included in the guides, as questions were formulated during interviews, in accord with the stories told by interviewees. Many questions also revolved around obtaining more details or a better understanding of the particular aspects of family life which interviewees related. The questions below were designed more as a list of topics that might be covered in an interview than a list of verbatim questions which should be asked. Thus, the questions asked in interviews did not always follow the wording found below.

In addition, the questions below do not follow a particular order, nor did the questions posed to interviewees follow any particular order. Usually, interviews began with some general questions aimed at making the interviewee feel comfortable and setting a conversational, narrative tone to the interview.

Suggested Interview Topic Guide - Women and Men

What is your education?

What do you do?

Where are you from?

How old were you when you got married?

How did the participant meet his/her current partner or a previous partner?

How would the participant describe his/her relationship with a current or previous partner?

What kinds of decisions are made by men and women in the participant's household?

How are household decisions in the participant's household negotiated?

How does the participant describe her own role and position within her family?

What does a typical day's work entail for the participant?

What are some common sources of conflict with the participant's partner or ex-partner?

What are some common sources of conflict with other household members?

How often is the participant able to draw on social ties to obtain needed or desired benefits?

What, if any, control over or access to economic resources does the participant enjoy?

What social or tangible benefits does the participant derive from any skills, knowledge, or abilities she possesses (including educationally-derived abilities)? In particular, how does this knowledge and ability affect her household interactions?

Does the participant's partner attempt to dictate or regulate her behaviour in any way? If so, when and how is behaviour regulated?

What is a good (bad) wife like?

If you know someone who is a good (bad) wife, what is she like?

What is a good (bad) husband like?

What abuse has the participant suffered at home?

How has the participant responded to abuse she has suffered?

How have the participant's friends and family responded to the abuse she has suffered?

Were any state organs or service providers approached in the process of responding to abuse or violence? If so, how did the state organs or service providers respond?

What, according to the participant, have been the worst experiences in her relationship with her intimate partner or ex-partner?

What do you like most about your partner? What do you dislike most?

Does the participant have any thoughts regarding gender equality or inequality, either within her household or more generally within Tibetan society, Tibetan regions, or China?

According to the participant, how should unacceptable behaviour within intimate partner relationships be dealt with? Who should intervene and how? How should the individuals involved respond?

What happened during your most recent argument with your husband/wife?

What was the biggest argument you had with your husband/wife recently?

When they argued, what things did he say to her? What did she say?

How did the event make you feel? What were your thoughts at the time this happened?

Why do you think this happened?

Tell me about a time when you were bullied.

How are decisions made regarding how many children to have and the children's marriages, about buying or building a house (or car)?

Can you tell me the story of one of the abusive incidents you witnessed or heard about?

Can you tell me what happened during the worst abusive incident witnessed?

Have any of your friends or relatives experienced couple conflict or abuse? Can you tell me what happened to them?

How would you respond and have you responded to domestic violence occurring to a friend or relative? Would you advise or interfere at all?

(for secondhand stories of violence:) Why do you think he wanted to hit her?

Why do you think he/she wanted to treat him/her that way?

Suggested Interview Topic Guide - Policy Actors (i.e. government officials, women's empowerment activists, and community leaders)

How has women's social status changed in recent years or decades?

How have women's position/role within households changed?

How do you define domestic violence?

Have you ever addressed domestic violence in your work? If so, how?

Is domestic violence a major problem in this area?

Is domestic violence something NGOs or activists should address?

Have there been any changes to domestic violence within households in recent years/decades?

How does the government respond to cases of domestic violence? Have there been any changes in government response?

How would you respond and have you responded to domestic violence occurring to a friend or relative? Would you advise or interfere at all?

What is an adequate response to domestic violence, on the part of family and community members, and state organs?

What is preventing your ideal response from being implemented?

What are the major issues or problems of gender inequality in Tibetan society?

How should Tibetan society respond to these issues? Is there a particular role to be played by particular individuals or groups?

Can you explain the work you are doing and have done to help women?

What should women's role within households be?

Who is responsible for responding when domestic violence occurs, and how are they meant to respond?

Appendix 4 – Theories of Violence Against Women in Postcolonial and Underprivileged Contexts

Various theorists argue men's feelings of emasculation drive increases in sexism or violence against women. This pattern, it is argued, is engendered by the movement of women into traditionally male roles, women refraining from behaving in ways that support men's sense of superiority, or mobility and visibility of women in traditionally male spaces. Within underprivileged communities, it is argued, men's sense of masculine superiority is also eroded by economic marginalisation, as this leads to an inability to successfully undertake the role of household breadwinner. Theorists contend that within post-colonial settings, the legacy of colonial-era policies as well as ongoing racism and denigration erodes men's self-esteem. Further raised by theorists is the concept of transference, in which rage and low self-worth resulting from racism and state violence become transferred via violence towards family members of lesser status than oneself (Kandirikirira, 2002; Makley, 2002, 2003, 2005; Poupart, 2003). Internalisation of dominant racist stereotypes that one's ethnic group is violent or predatory can also contribute to low self-esteem and violence against women (Franklin II, 1984; Johnson, 2010; Poupart, 2003; Snider, 2007).[87] Makley similarly contends emasculation of Tibetan men has been in part the result of Communist-engendered destruction of traditional monastic authority, capitalist commercialisation which involves greater visibility of women within spheres previously regulated by monastic authorities, and increased numbers of women who are becoming nuns. These phenomena, contends Makley, are linked to increasing social restrictions on Tibetan women's sexuality (2002, 2003, 2005).

However, many of the above arguments tend to over-idealise the relative gender equality of the pre-colonial or pre-racist past with sweeping statements unattended by sufficient historical evidence. With regards to Tibet, for example, Gyatso and Havnevik note the following:

> Certain notions have often been assumed, such as that Tibetan women [historically] enjoyed more freedom than their counterparts in other Asian countries, and that models of female divinity in Indo-Tibetan religions have had a liberating effect on women's social status. But such notions are far from substantiated and are likely to be misleading. (Gyatso & Havnevik, 2005, p. 1)

It might make less sense, furthermore, to talk about overall declines in women's status than to speak of changes over time leading to different types of subordination and different arenas in which heavy restrictions on women exist (Bartky, 1990; Berger, Rupp, Strasser, Wu, & Bennett, 2008; Stark, 2007; Walby, 1990). Despite this, the notion that racism, state violence, economic marginalisation, and changes in women's behaviour, roles, and mobility may be salient factors

[87] Unlike the case of certain discriminated communities, however, Hillman and Henfry's evidence suggests Tibetan men do not internalise racist stereotypes that devalue their sense of self-worth. Rather, the belief that Tibetan men are more masculine than Han men is a point of pride for Hillman and Henfry's Tibetan male respondents (2006).

affecting violence against women remain as common factors within the various theories listed here.

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Appendix 5 - Feminist Activism in Eastern China

In eastern China, particularly Beijing, women have protested or campaigned against DV, and formed organisations and support services to raise awareness and provide aid to survivors (Leggett, 2016; Zhang, 2009). Such activism specifically around DV does not appear to have occurred in Tibetan communities of the study region, though a small number of official interventions have been occasionally implemented, such as temporary shelter provided to a victim by the Women's Federation. In the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and eastern China, feminist activism has been central in catalysing the passage of DV legislation, awareness in the media and public, or the establishment of refuges and hotlines for DV survivors (Heo, 2010; Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999; Pleck, 1987; Walker, 1990; Yoshihama, 2002; Zhang, 2009). This type of activism has not yet occurred in Tibetan regions.

In China more broadly, women's NGOs began to form in the 1980s, while the 1995 UN World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, instigated a surge of activity by women's groups as well as enhanced governmental support for women's NGOs (Leggett, 2016; Zhang, 2009).[88] Examples of campaign groups include the Anti-DV Network of China, which conducts research, runs trainings of police officers and other officials, and engages in legal advocacy (Hester, 2005; Zhang, 2009). The Media Monitoring for Women Network promotes gender equality in the media industry and promotes representation of women's stories in the media. Leggett describes 'Feminist Voice', a microblog managed by the network on the Sina Weibo platform, in which activists aim to raise awareness about DV; organise protests, marches, and petitions; and build networks with university-based and other women's groups (2016). Other recent feminist activism has included awareness-raising online, publicising the high rates of sexual harassment faced by women factory workers, pressing authorities for action regarding gender discrimination in schools and job advertisements, and protesting against unfair division of land and property for married women in rural areas (“2013 中国的 12 个女权时刻 (12 Feminist Moments in China in 2013),” 2014).

The activities of feminist activists, however, have come under government attention and repression in recent years. In its 2014 report, Human Rights Watch reported that "Ye Haiyan, China's most prominent sex worker rights activist, was detained by police for several days after being assaulted at her home in Guangxi province over her exposure of abusive conditions in local brothels" (*World Report 2014: Country Chapters: China*, 2014). Most of the volunteers working with Ye quit after being visited in their homes by police and warned to cease contact with her (Wan, 2013). Meanwhile, 10 women who have held protests against DV and sexual harassment, and who called on the government to provide more female public toilets, were taken into custody by police in 2015, with five of them remaining in custody for over a month before their release (Patience, 2015; Tatlow, 2016).

[88] This surge of activity in the 1990s may also have caused an increase in discussions of DV on Chinese television, something study informants told me affected their own awareness and understanding of the issue.

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Appendix 6 – Challenges of Fieldwork

The process of fieldwork raised a number of challenges, both expected and unforeseen. Some of these challenges are described in the Introduction to this thesis, while remaining challenges are described below.

One of the challenges I faced revolved around the issue of self-immolations and the political sensitivities of working in a Tibetan region. I was lucky to have completed most of my interviews immediately prior to a period when instances of Tibetan self-immolations surged. This period caused government employees to fear speaking with me, and also caused many Tibetan areas to be temporarily closed to foreigners. In one instance, I did not know that a location had been closed off, and I was turned away on the road and not allowed to enter. In another case, I called a friend who I had visited a few months earlier, as he had agreed to introduce me to interviewees in his area. He told me it was too sensitive a time to visit his county, and I should wait before visiting again or trying to interview individuals. Other problems involved others' suspicions regarding my or my research assistant's underlying motives. In most cases, individuals were not suspicious, perhaps because I was introduced to all interviewees through friends or through friends of friends. In one case, however, my female assistant visited a particular location on her own, where all the individuals she attempted to interview were suspicious of her, believing perhaps that she was a government spy. In one village, I began a conversation with some villagers I came across. In this case, the individuals were not introduced to me by a local friend. I heard afterwards that they suspected I was a Christian missionary, while during our conversation they told me directly that they suspected I was a government spy. The above-mentioned issues did not pose major problems, however, and I was especially lucky to have travelled to most of the villages and nomadic settlements prior to the peak in self-immolations, when many Tibetan areas became closed to foreigners.

As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, I chose to undertake numerous ethical precautions to protect women's safety. In order to protect interviewees' safety and confidentiality, I made sure to interview individuals in isolation, away from any family members or friends. This proved difficult at times, especially because those introducing me to interviewees or family members of interviewees did not always understand why I insisted on interviewing individuals in a separate room or in a space where they could be alone. I usually attempted to use the excuse that this was a regulation placed upon me by my university and supervisors, though in one case a woman responded by suggesting I simply lie to my university about what I had done. In one case, I stayed in the house of a relative of a friend when I visited a village. I explained to the relative that I would need to interview individuals alone. She asked a friend of hers to visit her house and talk to me when she had some free time, but during my interview with this friend, the woman of the house entered and decided to sit and listen to the second half of our interview. The WHO ethical guidelines make provision for such a scenario, however, and I was ready to change the topic of conversation as soon as the private space of the interview was ruptured, so as to protect interviewee safety and confidentiality.

One problem which I encountered during fieldwork related to women's heavy workload in nomadic and farming areas, particularly during the summer months. This led to difficulty in finding time to speak with women, as they were busy all day long. In one nomadic settlement which I visited during the summer, I spoke to women while they were engaged in chores within their home or tent, such as churning milk into butter. As this work was ongoing, I commenced our interview. In this settlement, however, not all women were available for interview, and I walked around the settlement with a friend who was a native of the settlement until I found a couple of women who were in a position to speak with me.

Ethical precautions required me to interview only one woman per household, and to avoid interviewing others within her family, so that her family members would not discover the topic of research. Following some interviews, however, I found that some interviewees were related to each other in ways I did not foresee. In one case, I visited a village and stayed with a relative of a friend. I explained to her that I needed to interview women in a private space, and they should be married women from different households.[89] I later discovered that two of the interviewees she introduced me to were actually sisters. She considered them to belong to different households because they had both married patrilocally. In another case, I interviewed a women's empowerment activist and several months later worked with a man to transcribe many of my interviews. I realised eventually that this man was actually the activist's husband! As soon as I discovered this, I asked him not to transcribe her interview, which he in any case had not begun transcribing. However, he had been in possession of the interview recording for some time and may or may not have already listened to it. Luckily, in those cases in which problems did occur, such that one interviewee was the family member or relative of another, the interviewees in question were not victims of DV or abuse and I therefore did not need to worry about danger to the women involved. During fieldwork, I also meticulously recorded the home village of each interviewee, so that I could ensure my two research assistants did not travel to the same locations I travelled or interview more people in the same villages where I had already interviewed respondents.

At times, it was difficult to interview individuals in remote nomadic settlements, as my local friends tended to live in towns and preferred to introduce me to individuals residing nearby their own residence, such that travel would not be necessary. Interviewees in farming villages were easier to access, as houses in farming villages tend to be located in close proximity to each other. Each family within a nomadic settlement, on the other hand, often lives a significant distance away from each other. Sometimes I pushed friends or friends of friends to introduce me to those living on the grasslands, so that I could access the experience of rural nomadic women and men. Often friends felt the need to be hospitable and travel with me to whichever location I went, and so I emphasised that I would be happy to travel to the locations in question on my own or with an acquaintance of my friend who was already en route to the settlement. Usually my friend would introduce me to another friend or relative residing in the settlement in question, who could then take me to one or two households in the settlement so that I could find interviewees. The lack of

[89] While not all interviewees were married, the vast majority were. I deliberately asked to interview currently or previously married women so as to prevent interviewing young women who had never experienced an intimate partner relationship. Marriage in this region often occurs at an early age, so focusing on married women did not prevent me from interacting with interviewees across a wide age spectrum.

public transport in remote regions meant I needed to have a local contact with a motorcycle and the time to spend an afternoon taking me to his or her fellow community members' houses. Usually, a bit of flexibility on my part, and most importantly the wonderful graciousness and hospitality of my local friends, made this possible.