

# The Issue of Gender in Relation to Psychological Domestic Violence in China: A Focus on Non-verbal Behavior Used/Experienced by Husbands and Wives in Conflict

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## Abstract

This article reports the results of a survey that addresses some of limitations of the earlier research on domestic violence in China. It begins by presenting a literature review of the existing research of domestic violence in China, particularly psychological violence, referring to its background, development, achievement, research, and issues. Domestic violence has not been seen as a *“family/private”* matter but as a *“public”* matter in the recent decade in China. However, researching domestic violence, particularly psychological violence is new in China that the research may be limited in some aspects by a lack of experience. This survey therefore focuses on an exploration of psychological violence, specifically of these non-verbal behaviors *“glaring”*, *“threatening with fists”* and *“stamping of foot”* because Chinese husbands and wives are likely to use/experience them in conflict. *“Glaring”* and *“threatening with fists”* can be classified as *“active”* non-verbal behavior, namely that which potentially precedes a physical attack upon victims, while *“stamping of foot”* can be classified as *“passive”* non-verbal behavior, namely that which doesn't threaten or precede a real attack upon victims. The results of this survey presented here provide a more specific overview of how couples actually behave in conflict. First, these three non-verbal behaviors are frequently and more or less differently used by husbands and wives in their conflicts. Second, there is no significant difference in such non-verbal behaviors between intellectual and non-intellectual families. Finally, there is a gender difference in such non-verbal behaviors occurring between husbands and wives in conflict. The results show that husbands are more likely to use *“active”* non-verbal behaviors, while wives are more likely to use *“passive”* non-verbal behavior. Thus such a difference may be seen as gender inequality. Gender inequality, closely linked to factors such as history, society and culture, may influence the choice of using non-verbal behavior by husbands and wives in conflict. This inequality represents power and superi-

ority: men as dominant and women as subordinate historically and socially in the Chinese family. Importantly, this survey has not only offered something new in comparison with the previous studies, but also overcome the limitations of the author's research in relation to research design and to the sample of non-intellectual respondents. This article suggests that all society should do more (particularly in the area of education) in order to eliminate domestic violence and gender inequality.

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**Key words**

Gender, psychological domestic violence, non-verbal behavior, China

## **Introduction**

Under the influence of the 1995 UN Women's Conference in Beijing, the term "domestic violence" by the West was first introduced in the Chinese research field. Moreover this term is gradually being substituted for the traditional terms "*fuqi dajia*" (couple-fighting) or "*fuqi chaojia*" (couple-quarrelling), specifically "*laogong da laopo*" (wife-beating) or "*nanren da niuren*" (women-beating) (Milwertz, 2003; Ye, 2010) because Chinese academics and practitioners from different fields, including sociology, psychiatry, medicine, social policy, law, criminology, human development and social work, have all contributed to the exploration and discussion of domestic violence. It is readily apparent that the exploration of domestic violence has developed rapidly in China (Hester, 2005).

In particular, and thanks to the efforts of Chinese academics and practitioners, domestic violence has begun to be seen not as a "*family/private*" matter but as a "*public*" matter in the recent decade in China. The government at different levels has started to be concerned with and to take positive action regarding this issue. For example, the prohibition of domestic violence was stipulated in the 2001 New China Marriage Law (Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China, 2001). Perpetrators therefore can be punished by the law. Multi-organizational cooperation, such as among academic institutions and universities, hospitals, and the Public Security Bureau, communities, and non-governmental organizations/agencies, and so on, has developed as various organizations participated in intervention against this violence (The

Group, 2010). For example, in the Public Security Bureau, a telephone line (110) has been opened for those who are experiencing domestic violence. Ordinary people have gradually come to realize that they cannot say “yes” to domestic violence. For instance, between 2004 and 2008, the All-China Women’s Federation (ACWF) accepted the 40,000 - 50,000 complaint cases of domestic violence by victims as the annual average, which occupied ten per cent among all different kinds of cases (Anti-Domestic Violence Network of China Law Society, 2010).

However, the history of domestic violence research is much shorter in China (just over ten years) than in the West (over thirty years). Researching domestic violence is so new for Chinese academics that there may be a few issues in the process of research. For example, it may remain limited, political and less systematic or scientific. Examining the literature on this field, the author saw that the previous studies might have focused more on the prevalence of domestic violence, for example, how much husbands violate their wives, and how much wives suffer from such violence by their husbands. According to this result, it might be difficult to see how couples actually behave in the home. The author also saw that the previous studies might have focused less on experiences, impacts, and gender-based relationships between victims and perpetrators. This implies that the previous studies might only rarely reveal why and how domestic violence occurs in the home. In particular, having reviewed the literature, the author saw that some of the previous studies ignored practical investigations while paying more attention to discussing some abstract contents, covering strategies/measures against domestic violence, which may have been influenced more or less by politics. Imaginarily, if the researcher does not explore domestic violence deeply in practice, how can he/she understand its issues at a deeper level? How can he/she provide substantial and detailed data to the central government that has power to make policy and law? If the government lacks the real data, how can it make good policy and law for people to stop domestic violence? Thus, the author considers that a key point for the researcher should be to explore the practical aspects of domestic violence. The author further saw that some of the previous studies failed to provide a detailed description of the research process, an omission which has an impact on the readers who cannot estimate and learn from this research. For instance, the previous studies con-

cluded that psychological domestic violence occurs more in intellectual families than in non-intellectual families (Ling, 2005; Ma, 2003; Y. Wang, 2007; Y. Zhao, 2008). This view may mislead the readers because there was a lack of practical or persuasive data to support such a conclusion. Also the previous studies did not specifically show how wives behaved in conflict. According to these issues in research, the author suggests that the researcher should consider them carefully, which would benefit the development of the Chinese research on domestic violence.

As Lee and Stanko (2003) point out, domestic violence is a very sensitive topic and research because it is fraught with difficulties. Through the research, academics suggest that domestic violence includes a variety of types such as physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence and so on (Feng, 2008; Qu, 2007). In particular, the results revealed that psychological violence as a form of domestic violence is very common in all forms, including physical, psychological or emotional, sexual and financial aspects (Horley, 1988; Kelly, 1988; Mooney, 2000; Qi, 2004; Smith, 1989; W. W. Li, 2003). For instance, in the UK, about half of women (48%) have experienced frightening threats (Walby & Allen, 2004), while in China the phenomenon of psychological violence appears to be widespread: according to the Police Report Centre in Dalian City, 70 or 80 per cent of cases, among 834 cases of domestic violence, dealt with psychological violence (Tang, 2003; W. Li, 2003). Such violence therefore has been a prominent concern among academics (Feng, 2008; Qi, 2004; Zhai, 2005).

However, why does psychological domestic violence occur more frequently between husbands and wives? What specific forms of such violence do perpetrators employ to abuse their partners? How does such violence occur in the home, particularly between husbands and wives? Is there a difference in such violence by husbands and wives? Do they use/experience psychological domestic violence differently? Is there an issue of gender inequality in such violence occurring between husbands and wives? Whether the occurrence of psychological domestic violence between husbands and wives is linked to an understanding of gender in aspects of history, society and culture? These questions might have been analyzed and discussed less in the previous studies. Thus, the author will study such questions and try to find answers to them.

*Psychological Violence ('Cold' Violence)*

Two levels of psychological violence are conceptualized by Western and Chinese writers. One is the effect of physical abuse on victims' emotional state. Another is "pure" psychological violence without physical behavior/injury (Kirkwood, 1993; Lan & Jin, 2002; Ye, 2010; L. Zhang & Liu, 2004). The former means that physical violence leaves emotional scars on its victims, and can cause anxiety and a range of other psychological symptoms and difficulties within relationships. Thus, victims can experience emotional abuse and threats in addition to physical violence (Horley, 1988; Hague & Malos, 2005). But the latter indicates that such violence does not accompany physical violence. In contrast to physical violence, psychological abuse is an attack on the victims' personalities rather than on their bodies. This type of violence is enacted at a purely emotional level, and consists of such things as verbal insults and emotional deprivation (Kirkwood, 1993). The author's study focuses on this "pure" type.

Psychological violence is a newer term – equivalent to the term "domestic violence" (Y. Wang, 2004) – for what has been called "cold" violence in China (Guo, 2004; Hu & Zhang, 2003; Hou, 2006; Tian, 2009; Yan, 2005; Yi, 2008). The term 'cold' violence occurs much more often than the term "psychological violence" in newspapers, magazines and journals, television and broadcasting programs, and even academic reports, so that this term usually substitutes for the term "psychological violence" in China. Why do the Chinese academics prefer "cold" violence to psychological violence in practice? This is because such violence is the opposite of "hot" violence (physical violence) within the Chinese context (J. Li & Ma, 2003; Lie, 2003; W. Wang, 2007). When "cold" and "hot" are compared in Chinese, the former usually links with moon, water, cool, darkness, passivity, indifference, inferiority, while the latter links with sun, fire, heat, lightness, activity, friendliness, superiority, and power (Rydström, 2003). Accordingly, "cold" violence impacts on victims invisibly, without causing a wound or without bleeding, but "hot" violence apparently impacts on victims visibly, causing a wound or blood (Chen, 2007; Q. Ye, 2011a). "Cold" (psychological) violence therefore is likely to be neglected (C. Zhao, 2007) because victims may

find it difficult to tell their stories to others (Q. Ye, 2011a). When perpetrators use such behavior to abuse their partners, its harm will leave psychological scars on victims (Kirkwood, 1993). Such scars cannot be healed (Mooney, 2000, p. 33).

Within this context, Chinese academics separate psychological violence from other forms of domestic violence and explore it in different ways. This is in contrast to the research conducted by UK scholars and practitioners (Ye, 2010). Chinese academics make this separation because of the Chinese legal and cultural context (Ye, 2008). Regarding the legal context, prohibition of domestic violence was first stipulated in Marriage Law only in 2001 and this law contains only a non-explicit definition of psychological violence (Liu, 2007; The Group, 2010; Ye, 2008, 2010). This may influence the Chinese people's awareness of what is psychological violence. In daily life, perpetrators may not know that their abusive behaviors such as non-communication, threatening gestures and dirty language and so on to their partners in the home are called psychological violence, while victims may also not know that they are experiencing these abusive behaviors belonging to psychological violence. Moreover the abstract items in the law influence lawyers' judgment regarding cases of psychological violence in court (The Group, 2010). Because of this, a special law—China Law on the Prevention and Punishment of Domestic Violence—will be promulgated soon.

Within this context, Chinese academics, through their research, specially define “cold” violence in a manner which focuses mainly on its forms and helps people to understand what such violence is. As some writers point out (X. Wu, 2000; W. W. Li, 2003; Luo, 2005; Qi, 2004; Qu, 2007; Zhou, 2002), “cold”/psychological violence includes when one partner of a couple threatens, intimidates and abuses the other, which leads the other to having mental illness; when one partner threatens another, destroys furniture, hurts animals, batters and intimidates children, which leads the other to anxiety and feelings of insecurity and safety; when one partner often maliciously depreciates, criticises, humiliates, scoffs at, ridicules and hurls insults at another publicly or privately; when one partner often makes things difficult for, interferes with, doubts, prevents or restricts the personal freedom of another, which negatively influences the normal work and life of the other partner; or, finally, when one partner openly brings a new partner, a “third” party

to the home, and cohabits with the third party, thereby humiliating the spouse.

But other Chinese academics in their definitions mainly emphasize behavior used by husbands and wives in conflict. For example, in conflict perpetrators usually are indifferent to, look down upon, and/or are estranged from their partners. Specifically, perpetrators' behavior may be reflected in not caring, communicating with, or stopping or perfunctorily having sexual activities with their partners, and laziness in doing household tasks. "Cold" violence reveals behavior by husbands and wives that is manifested more in maltreatment and abusive language, e.g. swearing or depriving the right of finance (L. Wang & Zhang, 2005). Their definitions enable people to picture what psychological violence is. Thus, "cold" violence, in comparison with "hot" violence, is more hidden and enduring. Such violence is called an invisible "soft knife" (Liao, 2003) and impacts seriously on victims (Ye, 2010). Noticeably, the author uses the term "psychological violence" in this article rather than "cold" violence because the former, at an academic level, is the universally-accepted term in this field.

### *Why This Research*

The author focused on psychological domestic violence because such violence can be seen as a social issue and one of mental health as well (R. E. Dobash & R. P. Dobash, 1992; Pahl, 1995; Pryke & Thomas, 1998; Yang, 2003; Williamson, 2000; Q. Ye, 2011a). As described above, psychological domestic violence occurs prominently between husbands and wives and can take many forms. Aggressors may, for example, use verbal abuse, including shouting, ridiculing, using an insulting nickname, humiliating, using foul language and so on, or non-verbal threats, including facial expressions, body gestures, and other non-verbal behavior such as neglect, non-communication, turning a "cold shoulder", isolation, deprivation, etc. (Ye, 2008). With regard to verbal abuse, when asked to choose the 'worst' type of psychological violence, 51 per cent rated ridicule as the hardest to deal with (Hanmer, 2000). With respect to non-verbal abuse, according to the survey by the China Law Society, 65 per cent of husbands did not communicate with or neglected their wives when there was conflict between husbands and wives (Cui, 2002;

Z. Yang, 2004; Yin & Jiang, 2007). Such verbal humiliation and non-verbal abuse lead victims to anger, shame, depression and a lack of self-confidence and loss of self-esteem (Goldsterin, 2002; J. Zhang, 2005), which has been reflected in the author's previous research. For example, in the one survey the author, 52.3 per cent (92/176) of the respondents reported that they felt very "angry" when suffering "dirty language" by their partners. Consequently, both these verbal and non-verbal behaviors can be called psychological abuse (Ye, 2008) and cannot be neglected.

The author conducted this research also because domestic violence can be seen as a gender issue (Hanmer, 2000; Jackson & Scott, 2002; Q. Ye, 2011b). Overall, women experience domestic violence differently in the home than men do, to the extent that they have been the main victims of this violence. For instance, in the UK 32 per cent of women had experienced domestic violence from this person four or more times compared with only 11 per cent of men, while in China more than 89 per cent of men have violated their wives by domestic violence at some time (Huang, Sun, & Lu, 2003; W. W. Li, 2003; Liang, Wang, & Xiao, 2004; Zhao, 2008). The author's previous study showed that 18.1 per cent of wives used dirty language as a form of psychological violence to their husbands, while 46.5 per cent of husbands used dirty language to their wives in conflict. One in five of the female interviewees (20%, 8/40) had experienced the introduction of a 'third party' into the household, while only one male interviewee (2.5%, 1/40) had experienced it (Q. Ye, 2011c).

Importantly, as Thomas (1977) suggests, in marriage and family relationships, communication is one of the primary activities marital partners engage in together, and it can be seen as a standard for measuring marital satisfaction. Communication, as Noller (1984) argues, affects marital satisfaction, and marital satisfaction in turn affects communication. The more and healthier the communication between spouses, the happier they may feel (Fitzpatrick, 1988). However, as shown in the above results, cases of verbal or non-verbal abusive behavior occurs often between husbands and wives. These abusive forms, which are closely linked to communication between husbands and wives in the home, have a serious impact on their marriage life.

The author therefore focused on communication between couples be-



cause their ability to communicate does much to determine their happiness together. If psychological violence occurs between husbands and wives, it means that the channel of communication between them has been obstructed. Why? Whorf (1976) suggests that language and communication are not only vehicles for carrying ideas, but also shapers of ideas and the programmers for mental activity. Poor communication will exacerbate the emotional problems of speakers and listeners, particularly those of the latter. Such uncertainty increases the potential for conflict (Noller, 1984) and directly influences the marital relationship. Accordingly, the subject of communication in marriage needs to be explored because communication is particularly important in marriage (Noller, 1984; Fitzpatrick, 1988; Q. Ye, 2011a, 2011c).

Finally, the author decided upon psychological violence as her research topic because in the literature, she found that a problem in relation to communication between couples is reflected in the previous studies done in China. For example, the previous studies might focus more on the results in relation to the prevalence of perpetrators (only husbands) using negative communication (verbal or non-verbal behavior) to abuse their wives. Also, the previous studies do not show *how* perpetrators communicate with their partners in the home and *what* experience their partners have under this abuse, or *why* they communicate with their partners in unhealthy ways. Further, the previous studies might rarely talk about a gender difference in the use or experience of negative communication between husbands and wives. Arguably, these studies neglected specific aspects concerning forms of psychological violence, gender, and as well as the impacts of abuse. Thus, the author has studied psychological violence and tries to answer the “what, why, and how” questions arising from this issue. Specifically, in this article she will provide a very small piece of all her research and only discuss the use/experience of specific non-verbal behavior (glaring, threatening with fists, and stamping of foot) by husbands and wives in conflict. She limits her discussion to these kinds of non-verbal abuse both because of the limited space here and because the neglect of such non-verbal behaviors in recent Chinese research of prioritizes them as recipients of our attention.

## Research Design and Key Findings

Research methods are a central part of social science research (May, 2001). Methods arise out of scientific knowledge and researchers will develop them as they reflect and think about the research problems repeatedly (Hegel, 1969). Based on the principle of research methods, the author first thought about her research questions and made her research proposal, then started her empirical investigation of domestic violence in China. But her specific research aims were as follows: to investigate use/experiences of psychological domestic violence principally between married couples; to investigate the types of psychological violence such as specific verbal and non-verbal behavior that are used by husbands and wives; to investigate whether there is a difference in this violence between intellectual and non-intellectual families; to investigate how psychological domestic violence impacts on the victims; and to investigate why women are the main victims of such violence. Second, quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in this exploration, which is because the researcher, as Skinner, Hester, and Malos (2005) have stated, should try to find the “best” way to explore research issues. Therefore, the author specifically used both a self-completion questionnaire survey and a series of in-depth interviews to collect the data and also used both quantitative data analysis and qualitative data analysis to analyze all data in this project. Notably, the author will briefly describe only the process of her survey because of the chosen research questions to be discussed in this article.

### *Samples and Collection*

Through using personal contacts for developing networks, the questionnaire data (the non-probability convenience samples) was collected in three different cities (Wuhan, Jingzhou and Xiaogan) in the Hubei Province of South-Central China between September and October 2003. Two hundred thirty-two respondents ( $n=128$  wives;  $n=104$  husbands) filled in the questionnaires. Among them, 156 respondents (67.2%) were from Wuhan, and 51 (22%) and 25 (10.8%) from Jingzhou and Xiaogan respectively. The samples were collected in seven *Damwei*<sup>1</sup>: Administration (16.4%), Primary school (10.8%), Middle school (8.2%), University

(35.3%), Hospital (10.3%), Telecommunication (9.5%), and Public Security Organs (9.5%). Accordingly, this implies that these subjects in this survey were married people from a variety of educational and occupational backgrounds. The age of the respondents ranged from 24 to 63 years old. While some of the participants were born in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the majority was between 30 and 49 years old. The respondents born in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s witnessed or experienced the Cultural Revolution and the Economic Reform in China. Their views on marriage and the family and on the relationship between husbands and wives are beneficial to this research because of their different experiences.

### *Questionnaire Design*

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section was concerned with demographic information and invited the respondents to provide personal information about themselves and their spouses. The 24 questions covered aspects such as age, sex, place of birth, place or area of residence, level of education, occupation, marital or divorced status, marriage or divorced age, income and financial situation, office rank, academic and technical titles, and hobbies and interests. The second section formed the main body of this questionnaire. The 55 questions dealt with specific family problems such as a conflict between partners, abusive behavior, including verbal (e.g. dirty language, ridicule, etc.) and non-verbal behavior (e.g. non-communication, glaring, etc.), emotions and impacts caused by physical and psychological violence, and attitudes towards marriage.

### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis is an essential step in the process of research because researchers need to make their data speak (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002) in order to shed light on the issues. Therefore, quantitative data analysis was used in this exploration. Faced with a large number of questionnaires (raw data), how do researchers analyze, including edit,

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<sup>1</sup> Work unit.

code them by counting them manually or by using a computer? For the sake of accuracy and speed in data analysis, SPSS is a widely used and comprehensive statistical social science research program (Bryman & Cramer, 1999). Using SPSS, a large volume of questionnaires or complex data can be changed into readily understood clear data. Overall, there were 179 variables in the questionnaire, arising from 24 questions in Part I and 55 questions in Part II. Regarding the data analysis, the author chose to examine frequencies and cross-tabulations, and also used Chi-Square to test for significance especially with regard to gender and level of educational achievement. Nevertheless, in this article the author will mainly show the analysis of results with percentage because such results may simply reveal how husbands and wives used/experienced the non-verbal behaviors in conflict. As explained above, one of the purposes of this research was to find what types of psychological violence husbands and wives use frequently and whether they use them differently in conflict. Through data analysis, something new was found and acknowledged, which differs from what has been found in earlier studies.

Key findings in this article cover non-verbal behaviors: facial expressions, including “glaring”, body gestures such as “threatening with fists” and “stamping of foot”, which are used by husbands and wives in conflict. Although such non-verbal behaviors are usually ignored in research, they have a serious impact on victims because husbands and wives use them to convey their attitudes and intentions (usually hostile) to each other in conflict (Q. Ye, 2011a). With respect to “glaring”, perpetrators may use this (looking at their partner angrily and fiercely) to frighten victims, hinting that severe violence may subsequently occur between victims and perpetrators. With regard to “threatening with fists”, perpetrators may use this (wanting to batter their partner) to threaten their victims, again indicating to the victim the potential of physical violence. Concerning “stamping of foot”, perpetrators may use this (making noise to their partner) to protest against their partners and to express anger to them (Q. Ye, 2011a). The key findings in this survey indicate that the respondents reported that the three non-verbal behaviors were used in conflict, namely husbands and wives were likely to choose to practice such behaviors in conflict. The result also shows that husbands and wives used these non-verbal behaviors more or less differ-

ently in conflict, while there was no significant difference in such non-verbal behaviors between intellectual and non-intellectual families if gender is not taken into account. The specific results of data are as follows:

### *Glaring*

Table 1 (a) examines the gender pattern of “glaring” in a conflict. It shows first that the vast majority of respondents saw themselves as using such behavior, with more than two thirds answering “yes including sometimes” (68.6%, 151/220<sup>2</sup>). Only 31.4 per cent of the respondents (69/220) did not practice such behavior in their conflict. In relation to gender, there is a difference, with 63.4 per cent of females (78/123) and 75.3 per cent of males (73/97) answering “yes including sometimes” to “glaring” respectively. The latter is 11.9 percentage points higher than the former. Such results suggest that in this survey both wives and husbands choose to practice such behavior in their conflict, but that husbands were more likely to say that they use this behavior, although the Chi-Square test indicates that there was no significant difference in it between them ( $X^2=3.533$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=.060$ ).

**Table 1 (a)**

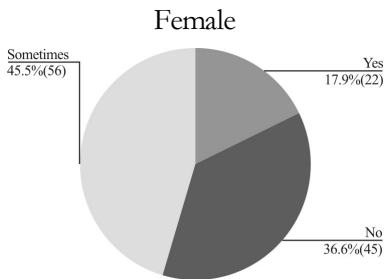
*‘When there is a conflict between you and your spouse, do you glare at your spouse?’(Q23) by gender of respondents*

Gender	Yes (including sometimes)	%	No	%	Total	%
Female	78	63.4	45	36.6	123	100.0
Male	73	75.3	24	24.7	97	100.0
Total	151	68.6	69	31.4	220	100.0

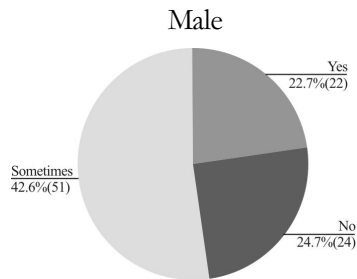
Pie Charts 1 (a) and (b) looks at the gender pattern of this behavior in detail. The results are similar to Table 1 (a) because husbands in this survey say that they practice such behavior more than their wives. The Pie Charts show that there appears to be a small difference in the practice of such behavior between wives and husbands. With respect to

<sup>2</sup> In Table 1 (a) and Pie Charts 1 (a & b), the *N* of valid is 220 (94.8%) and the *N* of missing is 12 (5.2%) among the 232 samples.

“yes”, the proportion of females is 17.9 per cent (22/123), while the proportion of males is 22.7 per cent (22/97). The latter is 4.8 percentage points higher than the former. With regard to “sometimes”, the proportion of females is 45.5 per cent (56/123), whereas the proportion of males is 52.6 per cent (51/97). The latter is 7.1 percentage points higher than the former. But the Chi-Square test indicates that there was no significant difference in using such behavior between husbands and wives ( $X^2=3.603$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p=.165$ ). Therefore, it may be inferred that this behavior was used frequently and similarly between husbands and wives in their conflict.



Pie Chart 1 (a): When there is a conflict between you and your spouse, you glare at your spouse by female respondents



Pie Chart 1 (b): When there is a conflict between you and your spouse, you glare at your spouse by male respondents

However, the picture becomes more complex when educational background is taken into account. Table 1 (b) shows that no matter what educational backgrounds both female and male respondents have, the majority of them may be likely to use “glaring” against their partners because the proportions of the four groups are over 60 per cent, a result which is similar to the results of the gender pattern of this behavior in Table 1 (a). Table 1 (b) also shows that there is a similarity in this non-behavior between wives (68.4%, 13/19) and husbands (70.6%, 12/17) with “School Education<sup>3</sup>” ( $X^2=.020$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=.888$ ). The latter is

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<sup>3</sup> School Education means the education below Senior School and Secondary Specialized School, namely including Senior School, Secondary Specialized School, Junior School and Primary School. In this survey, there were only 38 respondents at the level of School Education among the total of the 232 samples.

only 2.2 percentage points higher than the former. However, there is a significant difference in such non-verbal behavior between wives and husbands with “College Education<sup>4</sup>”, ( $X^2=5.100$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=.024$ ). This is because 64.5 per cent of the female respondents (60/93) reported that they glared at their husbands in a conflict, while 80.3 per cent of the male respondents (61/76) reported that they did so. The latter is 15.8 percentage points higher than the former.

**Table 1 (b)**

*‘When there is a conflict between you and your spouse, do you glare at your spouse?’ (Q23) by gender of respondents with different educational background s<sup>5</sup>*

Educational Level/Gender	Yes (including sometimes)	%	No	%	Total	%	
School Education	F	13	68.4	6	31.6	19	100.0
	M	12	70.6	5	29.4	17	100.0
College Education	F	60	64.5	33	35.5	93	100.0
	M	61	80.3	15	19.7	76	100.0

Table 1 (b) suggests that a difference in “glaring” mainly occurs from husbands in both educational groups. Eighty point three per cent of husbands (61/76) with “College Education” said that they glared at their wives in a conflict, while 70.6 per cent of husbands (12/17) with “School Education” reported so. The proportion of the former is 9.3 percentage points higher than the latter. These results suggest that a high proportion of intellectual husbands may be likely to use such non-verbal behavior to abuse their wives in a conflict. Additionally, if we ignore gender when we compare the group “College Education” to the group “School Education”, the results are very similar. Seventy-one point six per cent of the respondents (121/169) in the former group

Regarding Group ‘School Education’, in Table 1 (b) and Table 2 (b) the  $N$  of valid is 36 (94.7%) and the  $N$  of missing is two (5.3%), but in Table 3 (b), the  $N$  of valid is 35 (92.1%) and the  $N$  of missing is three (7.9%).

<sup>4</sup> College Education means the education over College, namely including the levels of College, Undergraduate and Postgraduate.

<sup>5</sup> In Table 1 (b) the  $N$  of valid is 205 (88.4%) and the  $N$  of missing is 27 (11.6%) among the total of the 232 samples.

said that they used this behavior in a conflict, whereas 69.4 per cent of the respondents (25/36) in the latter group said that they did so. Accordingly, the result in this survey shows that there may be almost no significant difference in this behavior between the two groups if gender is not taken into account.

### *Threatening with Fists*

Table 2 (a) looks at the gender pattern in “threatening with fists” in conflict. It shows first that the majority of respondents (83.2%, 183/220) did not practice such behavior in their conflict. Nevertheless, it also shows that such a phenomenon does actually occur between wives and husbands because 16.8 per cent (37/220) of the respondents chose “yes including sometimes.” Considering the gender groups, the results show that the proportions of wives and husbands are quite different. The proportion of males (23.2%, 22/95) is nearly twice than that of females (12%, 15/125), indicating that husbands in this survey say that they practiced such behavior much more than their wives ( $X^2=4.804$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=.028$ ).

**Table 2 (a)**

*‘When there is a conflict between you and your spouse, do you threaten your spouse with your fists?’ (Q25) by gender of respondents:*

Gender	Yes (including sometimes)	%	No	%	Total	%
Female	15	12.0	110	88.0	125	100.0
Male	22	23.2	73	76.8	95	100.0
Total	37	16.8	183	83.2	220	100.0

If we look at the two educational groups, ignoring gender, the result in Table 2 (b) shows that there is no significant difference between them in using this behavior. Nineteen point four per cent of the respondents (7/36) with “School Education” reported that they used it to their partners, while 16.6 per cent of the respondents (28/169) with “College Education” reported this, too. However, if considering gender, the pattern is different. Table 2 (b) also shows that there is a slight difference in this behavior between wives and husbands with “School Education”. Twenty-one point one per cent of the female (4/19) re-



spondents said that they used this behavior in a conflict, while 17.6 per cent of the male respondents (3/17) said they did so. The proportion of the former is 3.5 percentage points higher than the latter. But the Chi-Square test indicates that there was no significant difference in using such behavior between husbands and wives ( $X^2=.066$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=.797$ ). However, the table also shows that there is a significant difference in this behavior between wives and husbands with “College Education” ( $X^2=5.729$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=.017$ ). Ten point five per cent of the female respondents (10/95) reported that they used this behavior, whereas 24.3 per cent of the male respondents (18/74) reported this, too. The proportion of the latter is 13.8 percentage points higher than the former. According to the results shown in Table 2 (b), wives may be slightly more likely to use “threatening with fists” than their husbands among the “School Education” group, while husbands may be more likely to use this behavior than their wives among the “College Education” group.

Table 2 (b)

*‘When there is a conflict between you and your spouse, do you threaten with your fists to your spouse?’ (Q23) by gender of respondents with different educational backgrounds*

Educational Level/Gender		Yes (including sometimes)	%	No	%	Total	%
School Education	F	4	21.1	15	78.9	19	100.0
	M	3	17.6	14	82.4	17	100.0
College Education	F	10	10.5	85	89.5	95	100.0
	M	18	24.3	56	75.7	74	100.0

### *Stamping of Foot*

Table 3 (a)<sup>6</sup> examines the gender pattern of a non-verbal behavior “stamping of foot” in a conflict. This table shows firstly that behavior such as “stamping of foot” also occurs between some husbands and wives. About one in five of all the respondents say that they use such

<sup>6</sup> In Table 3 (a) the  $N$  of valid is 217 (93.5%) and the  $N$  of missing is 15 (6.5%) among the 232 samples.

behavior (21.7%, 47/217). Considering the gender groups, the results show that there is again a difference in such behavior between wives and husbands, this time with more of the women saying that they use such behavior. The proportion of females, in respect to “yes including sometimes”, is 23.8 per cent (29/122), whereas the proportion of males is 18.9 per cent (19/95). The former is 4.9 percentage points higher than the latter. But the Chi-Square test indicates that there was no significant difference in such behavior between wives and husbands ( $X^2=.732$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=.392$ ). Apparently, the results suggest that both wives and husbands practiced such behavior similarly.

Table 3 (a)

*‘When there is a conflict between you and your spouse, do you stamp your foot to your spouse?’ (Q27) by gender of respondents*

Gender	Yes (including sometimes)	%	No	%	Total	%
Female	29	23.8	93	76.2	122	100.0
Male	18	18.9	77	81.1	95	100.0
Total	47	21.7	170	78.3	217	100.0

Looking at the educational groups, the result, ignoring gender, shows that the respondents with “School and College Education” practiced “stamping of foot” similarly. The former reported that 20 per cent (7/35) of them used this behavior in a conflict, while 22.2 per cent (37/167) of the latter reported this, too. But looking at gender, there is a difference between wives and husbands in both groups. Wives in both groups (21.1%, 4/19; 25%, 23/92) appeared more likely than husbands (18.7%, 3/16; 18.7%, 14/75) to stamp their foot. But the Chi-Square test indicates that there was no significant difference in such behavior between wives and husbands with the two groups ( $X^2=.029$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=.865$ ;  $X^2=.961$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p=.327$ ). Thus it can be inferred that both wives and husbands with the two groups practiced such behavior similarly in conflict.

Table 3 (b)

*'When there is a conflict between you and your spouse, do you stamp your foot to your spouse?' (Q23) by gender of respondents with different educational backgrounds*

Educational Level/Gender		Yes (including sometimes)	%	No	%	Total	%
School Education	F	4	21.1	15	78.9	19	100.0
	M	3	18.7	13	81.3	16	100.0
College Education	F	23	25	69	75	92	100.0
	M	14	18.7	61	81.3	75	100.0

### Analysis and Discussion

The key findings in this article reveal that both husbands and wives use non-verbal behavior frequently and more or less differently (ignoring the Chi-Square test) in their conflicts. This confirms the claim made by some psychologists that verbal or non-verbal abuse can be used powerfully in reality (Zhang, 2005). In this survey, the respondents reported their use/experience of these non-verbal behaviors (glaring, threatening with fists and stamping of foot), which indicates that they could not forget their experiences, including hurt feelings and other emotional impact. Also, the key findings show the frequency order of such non-verbal behaviors: “glaring” (68.6%, 151/220) is first, “stamping of foot” (21.7%, 47/217) second and “threatening with fists” (16.8%, 37/220) last. The results of the “School Education” group (69.4%, 25/36; 20%, 7/35; 19.4%, 7/36) and the “College Education” group (71.6%, 121/169; 22.2%, 37/167; 16.6%, 28/169) also follow this frequency order. This order shows that couples use the non-verbal behavior “glaring” much frequently in conflict -- probably because it may directly and quickly convey perpetrators’ threat signal to victims.

#### *'Active' and 'Passive' Non-verbal Behavior*

These three non-verbal behaviors have their own features and each plays different roles in the usage. The author in this research therefore classifies these non-verbal behaviors “glaring” and “threatening with fists” as “active” non-verbal behavior, while classifying “stamping of

foot” as “*passive*” non-verbal behavior. The former may have a serious impact on victims who fear the onset of fierce violence and injury and suffer more serious psychological harm, whereas the latter may have a lighter impact on victims, who may experience no severe fear and worry, but only annoyance. With respect to “glaring” and “threatening with fists”, perpetrators use it in conflict to express power because they can directly convey emotions such as “dislike”, “hate”, “anger”, “dominance”, “threat”, and so on to victims, namely implying a potential physical attack upon victims. When perpetrators want to control victims by these non-verbal behaviors, victims suffering this abuse have strong feelings of fear, panic, and worry because it is said that eyes can be seen as a window of one’s heart (Yi, 2010; Yi, 2006; Zhi, 2007) and because fists can be seen as a prelude to physical violence (Q. Ye, 2011c). The impact of such non-verbal behavior may indeed have a strong effect on victims’ psychological equilibrium. With regard to “stamping of foot”, perpetrators merely use it to express attitude because this gesture directly conveys “dislike”, “anger”, “rebellion”, “helplessness” and so on to victims, without threatening a real attack upon the victims. The perpetrators negatively resist in conflict. The impact of such non-verbal behavior may have no strong effect on victims, who only see it as a “disturbance”. Through the comparison of the two types, it can be inferred that the former is more powerful than the latter in couples’ conflict. This is because such “*active*” non-verbal behavior may develop into severe physical violence and therefore creates psychological trauma whether such violence actually follows the behavior or not, while such “*passive*” non-verbal behavior may be tolerated, even though such behavior they may be perceived as low-level aggression (Goldstein, 2002).

To the gender pattern, the results show that the husbands were more likely to practice “*active*” non-verbal behavior in conflict, but wives were more likely to practice “*passive*” non-verbal behavior in conflict. The proportions of the male respondents admitting to “glaring” and “threatening with fists” (75.3%, 73/97; 23.2%, 22/95) were higher than those of wives (63.4%, 78/123; 12%, 15/125) respectively; in particular, there was a significant difference in “threatening with fists” between husbands and wives by the Chi-Square test, which indicates that wives may be more likely to be hurt than husbands psychologically and physi-

cally, whereas the proportion of the female respondents in “stamping of foot” (23.8%, 29/122) was slightly higher than that of the male respondents (18.9%, 18/95), which indicates that husbands may be more likely to be merely annoyed. The choice of “*passive*” non-verbal behavior by wives may be indirectly reflected in the author’s interview data (which will be discussed later). However, the pictures become more complex when educational background is taken into account. The results show, first, that there was no significant difference in these non-verbal behaviors between the two educational groups. Second, the results are still more closely linked to the gender pattern. For example, the male respondents (70.6%, 12/17; 80.3%, 61/76) in the “School and College Education Groups” reported that they might be more likely to use “glaring” to their wives (68.4%, 13/36; 64.5%, 60/93) in conflict. In contrast, the female respondents (21.1%, 4/19) in the “School Education” group and the male respondents (24.3%, 18/74) in the “College Education” group reported that they used “threatening with fists” more than their partners within their own groups respectively. In particular, there was a significant difference in such behavior between husbands (24.4%, 18/74) and wives (10.5%, 10/95) in the “College Education” group as shown above. Accordingly, it may be revealed that there is a difference in such non-verbal behaviors (“*active*” and “*passive*”) as forms of psychological violence by husbands and wives in conflict. This difference may be seen as a gender issue. Why is there a gender issue in such non-verbal behaviors occurring more or less between husbands and wives in conflict? What factors have an impact on this? These questions should be considered and explored carefully.

### *Factors of History, Society and Culture*

Historically and socially, the concept ‘men outside but women inside’ has been passed down from generation to generation. Over half of both sexes (actually 61.6% of men and 54.8% of women) still consider this concept to be correct in today’s China (X. Li, 2001; Z. Li & Zuo, 2005; Yi, 2011). Although this Confucian idea was produced a thousand years ago, it has a continuous impact on people’s minds: women should do housework and look after the husband and children, while men are breadwinners, which shows an unequal position between women and

men (Gu, 2005). According to a 2001 investigation of the Chinese women's position, the result shows that the urban women (the majority of them with a full-time job) take an average of 21 hours per week to do to do housework, while men do it only for 8.7 hours (Xia, 2005). According to the newest government investigation (Yi, 2011), 72.7 per cent of the married respondents reported that wives, in comparison with husbands, do more housework. On weekends, wives take 240 minutes for rest, while husbands take 297 for rest. These results indicate that wives devote themselves to housework more than husbands. Why is there a difference between them in this? Men occupy a superior position and have more power than women because history and society have empowered them with the special power or privilege (Jackson & Scott, 2002). As Knapp and Hall (2002) suggest, a gesture may forecast the verbalization of a specific idea. Within this context, husbands may be more likely to use "*active*" non-verbal behavior such as "glaring" and "threatening with fists" (shown in the above data) to control their wives, which indicates that they have more power than their wives, and believe that wives should obey them. This is why wives are the main victims in these "*active*" non-verbal behaviors. This issue, referring to such non-verbal behaviors, has been ignored in the previous studies.

Nevertheless, the results in this survey also suggested something new and interesting. The data at the "School Educated" level shows that the female respondents (21.1%, 4/19) might use "threatening with fists" slightly more than their husbands (17.6%, 3/17) (ignoring the Chi-Square test). This may imply that non-intellectual wives in contemporary society did not mind that they were women who were expected to be "nice women" according to the traditional view. They perhaps dare to struggle for their rights with their husbands in the home. Since their husbands could use this behavior, non-intellectual wives might think that there is no reason why they cannot use it, too. Their behavior breaks with the convention that women/wives are regarded as subordinate. In conflict, they were likely to use such "*active*" non-verbal behavior slightly more than their husbands in order to express their emotions and struggle for their equality in the home. In the light of this result, it may be inferred that non-intellectual wives held more power over husbands who might potentially suffer physical attack in a conflict. In contrast, intellectual wives might try to save their face and want to

be good wives for their husbands. They (10.5%, 10/95) therefore use “threatening with fists” less than their husbands (24.3%, 18/74) and their husbands held more power over them (significance by the Chi-Square test). These results differ from the previous studies that claim that physical violence occurs more in non-intellectual families than in intellectual families. As shown in this survey, “threatening with fists”, which potentially develops into severe physical violence, is used frequently by intellectual husbands, which implies that intellectual husbands are likely to batter their wives in conflict. Thus this may be inferred that there is no direct relationship between education and domestic violence.

Further, both intellectual and non-intellectual wives, as described in the author’s interviews, who suffered psychological violence, said that their husbands behaved maliciously in conflict (no husbands talked about this). Noticeably, because of the author’s inexperience in conducting interviews, she regrettably did not elicit more specific descriptions or definitions of such behaviors, in particular of non-verbal behavior. Nevertheless, although the participants did not specifically describe non-verbal behavior, it may be inferred that the malicious action by husbands more or less included the “*active*” non-verbal behaviors such as “threatening with fists” and “glaring” because these individuals expressed that they always worried about the escalation of violence and feared their neighbors’ knowing when their husbands fought with them in the home. Facing this situation, they quickly shut the windows and doors and were silent. Accordingly, it may be inferred that women are likely to respond passively to their husbands’ abuse, namely to save their face and be subordinate in the home. Moreover, they never told the author that their husbands had behaved passively in conflict. Their experience therefore indicates that husbands use psychological domestic violence to control their wives successfully and have high position in family because they have been empowered historically and socially. This historically based power differential explains the interview data showing that psychological domestic violence therefore may occur equally in both intellectual and non-intellectual families.

Through this analysis and discussion, it can be found that the concept “men are superior to women” is still rooted in Chinese people’s minds. Socially, people identify men and women with a gendered understanding of women’s position in family and society as being subordinate (Jackson

& Scott, 1996). This identification focuses not on their biology or nature, but is a purely social definition (Jackson & Scott, 2002; Lerner, 1986). As a result, the term “gender” is produced in our life, which is unrelated to “sex”. These two terms are quite different because gender is seen as femininity and masculinity, while sex means female and male. The concept “gender” permeates the whole society, including politics, economy, policy, law, education, family, employment, medicine, welfare, etc. and impacts on people’s lives, in particular on the lives of women. For instance, in education, according to the national statistics, two hundred and twenty-three million people over 12 years old were illiterate and semi-illiterate in China. Among them, women comprised 70 per cent (one hundred and fifty-six million). As for the women who were not illiterate, their educational level was considerably lower. Women at the level of junior school and over junior school were 38 per cent of the total population at the same educational level, but only 1.5 per cent of women were at the post-graduate level (Du, 2005).

This education gap between men and women exists because of the traditional concept that “a woman without knowledge is seen as a virtuous person”, which means that women should not have any knowledge and should only follow their “innate natures” by looking after men. According to the old view, this is the only suitable role for women in family and society. However, this concept is still widely accepted today, particularly in backward areas (Du, 2005). For example, there is a difference between rural women and rural men in level of education. The proportion of rural women at the educational level over junior school was 42.3 per cent, which was 20.8 percentage points lower than that of rural men. Among this female group, 58.8 per cent of women accepted the normal education below primary school, which was 21.9 percentage points higher than that of men. The proportion of illiterate women was 13.6 per cent, which was 9.6 percentage points higher than that of men. This indicates that rural women are inferior to men in education, which directly reveals their low position in society (Wu, Wang, & Li, 2009) and also impacts on their position in the family. This concept hinders the development of women, and they, of course, easily experience psychological domestic violence by their husbands. Rationally considered, how can women without knowledge and working as housewives who are regarded as inferior to men in the home be more likely to choose “*active*”



non-verbal behavior in conflicts with their husbands?

The existence of gender inequality reflects that society truly does not respect women. In reality, women may not enjoy a right of life, study, and work that is equal to men's. For example, in employment, there is no cause for optimism because women have more difficulty in finding jobs than men. In a report of female college employment by ACWF, 56.7 per cent of female college students in interviews said that there was less opportunity for them in the process of seeking jobs than for male students. Ninety-one per cent of female students, when looking for jobs, felt that some staff held gender prejudice (Du, 2005). Such prejudice is readily apparent in many job advertisements: men first for this job within the context of the emphasis on equality between men and women in society (X. Li & R. Zhao, 1999; X. Wang, 2011). Why are such job advertisements prevalent in the supposedly egalitarian society to people's vision or to society? Why do female college students or women look for jobs difficultly? Some people (mainly men) who are in charge of units or companies think that there will be loss of profits if they employ young women who will soon be married and give birth to (Q. Yang, 2005). The people holding this view are going against nature and wrongly refusing to provide chances for young women to work. Giving birth to a child is not a shortcoming for women because men and women should bear this responsibility together for the sake of society as a whole. Society, in the light of women's biological role, should be concerned about women fairly because they play a special role for humankind.

Since 1949, the policy of retirement in China has not been amended yet and sticks to convention, which may not be appropriate for social development, including for women and men (Z. Ye, 2011). Such policy has hindered the development of society. This has recently been a heated topic for discussion and research in China (Yu, 2011). In the light of this research and discussion, why has the policy not been amended? This may be because decision-makers more or less hold the concept "men outside but woman inside". Actually, they approve "men are superior to women" in their mind reflexively. As a result, they have made a policy which does not conform to human rights. The retirement age is higher for men (60 years) than it is for women (55 years), which indicates that women cannot enjoy the right of the same retirement age as men (Hershatler, 2007; Mo, 2004; Ye, 2008). Noticeably, women may

always be hurt socially because they were the first to be affected in the labor market. For example, during the period of economic reform in China, women are the first to be laid off (*xiagang*) in comparison with men, which creates a wage gap between men and women in practice. In 1999, the total income of urban employed women was a gross 7409.7 yuan a year, which was 70.1 per cent lower in comparison with men. The salary of the urban women was 47.4 per cent below 5,000 yuan per year. The proportion of lower income by women was 19.3 per cent higher than that of men, while women whose salary were over 15 thousand yuan were 6.1 per cent, while women whose salaries were at the middle level were 6.6 percentage lower than men's (Du, 2005).

These old concepts and inappropriate policies in relation to gender difference expand the wage gap between men and women and determine how their respective labor is perceived. Within this context, men's work usually is economically and socially valued. In contrast, women's housework is usually not valued in family and society. In other words, the value of women's household management is never calculated in people's minds and never seen as a contribution to family and society. For example, one female individual in the author's interviews, who gave up her job and did housework and looked after their baby daughter in order to support her husbands, suffered domestic violence at his hands. Her husband said that he was breadwinner for the family so that he could abuse her. Importantly, he neglected how he did his job and achieved success if it had not been for his wife's support? Socially, the inequality of labor division empowers men to dominate women, apparently legitimately. As a result, the position of women, in comparison with men, is inferior in family and society (Tang, Wong, & Cheung, 2002), while men have power over women. If deeply looking at this, it may be seen that such gender inequality reflects a pervasive ideology in which women are not respected and are looked down upon socially. Thus there is no doubt about why women are the main victims both specifically in these "active" non-verbal behaviors such as "glaring" and "threatening with fists" by men and generally in psychological domestic violence.

As far as China is concerned, it is an old and civilized country. Its development has created rich and various cultures. As Orum (2001) illustrates, culture is a historic and objective phenomenon because it has

been passed on from generation to generation. Moreover culture becomes a strong force to restrain people's daily life and the development of history and society. This is reflected in a series of concepts such as "men outside but women inside" and "men are superior to women" and so on, which have spreads far and wide among the masses in China for many and many years, and are widely accepted even today. Take gender inequalities within families as an example. In China, if a son is of marriageable age, parents say that their son will take a wife (*quqi*), while if a daughter is also of marriageable age, parents say that they will marry their daughter to a husband (*jiaren*). According to the Chinese meaning, *quqi* means that the son still stays in the home and belongs to his parents' family, whereas *jiaren* means that the daughter cannot stay in the home and becomes a member of her husband's family. As an old saying in China goes: a married daughter is similar to pouring water (*jiachu de nü'er, puochu de shui*).

Thus, the problem of sex ratio at birth occurs very prominently in China because of the gender inequality between men and women. In particular, when the policy "one family, one child" has started to be implemented mainly in the urban areas, some of the urban Chinese couples more expect/want to have a boy rather than a girl. Moreover couples in the rural areas want to have more boys, although they are allowed to have one more child if the first baby is a girl. This again reflects the fact that people who have power to make policy and law cling to the concept "men are superior to women" for why else would rural couples be given the privilege of having a second baby if the first one is a girl? Within this context, many illegal medical agencies have been established and, for money, help those who want to have a boy to identify the sex of the fetus. If the fetus is a girl, the baby will be aborted. By the sixth national population census, the ratio of men to women (100) is 105.2. Although this ratio has declined 1.54 in comparison with the fifth national population census (Yu, 2011), the imbalanced sex ratio is still a key issue for China. Apparently, men and women, boys and girls, and even male and female fetuses, do not share similar life-chances culturally and socially (Hanmer, 2000). Women's position is lower than men's in marriage and family as well as in society.

Based on Confucian ideas, in the family, a model wife will be praised by her husband and in-laws and admired by her neighbors, friends and

her husband's colleagues for being genial and devoted. She will not express any views on any issues or argue with her husband, and she will tolerate anything her husband does to her, including domestic violence. Some of the interview cases are cases in point. A few female individuals said that their husbands required them not to argue with them when a conflict occurred between them. Their husbands see themselves as the center in the home and act as a patriarch to their wives. The results of the author's survey showed that wives were more likely to use "*passive*" non-verbal behavior (e.g. "stamping of foot") to their husbands in conflict because they had no power and felt helpless in comparison with their husbands. The Confucian ideas were influential for many centuries and apparently their ideology is still firmly rooted in people's (particularly men's) minds today.

Culturally, during the process of women's growth, they are usually educated as to how to become a good girl or wife. For example, they are instructed to play a series of mild games such as jump rope and hopscotch, and so on, which differ much from the games played by boys, such as sticks and guns, "red" and "blue" armies, fighting, and so on. From these different activities, we can see that girls' games less frequently involve winners or losers or the giving and taking of orders, while boys' games generally result in winners and losers and involve elaborating rules that are frequently the subject of arguments. Boys' behavior is more challenging than girls' and it is apparent that relative power seems to be an important part in boys' sub-cultures but much less so in girls' (Q. Ye, 2011a). Thus, this is why wives (23.8%, 29/122) are more likely to choose "*passive*" non-verbal behavior (e.g. "stamping of foot") in conflicts with their husbands (18.9%, 18/95), while why husbands (23.2%, 22/95) are more likely to choose "*active*" ones (e.g. "threatening with fists") in conflicts with their wives (12%, 12/125). In general, it can be inferred that gender inequality may impact on the choice of particular types of non-verbal behavior by husbands and wives in conflict. Women, who occupy an inferior position in the home, would be more likely to choose "*passive*" non-verbal behavior, while men, who occupy a superior position, would be more likely to choose "*active*" non-verbal behavior. As described in the above interview results, wives usually employed passive behavior (e.g. shutting windows and doors and being silent) to respond to their husbands' abuse.

Since the economic reform, Chinese people's view of marriage has been changing, with the result that young men and women are finding it increasingly difficult to find partners. Today's young women influenced by consumerist culture, praise highly the concept of "marrying a person who has power and wealth rather than succeeding in study". They express their "money worship" with clever-sounding words, for example, "It is better to cry in a BMW than to smile on a bike." Thus, young men in their twenties and thirties, at the beginning of their careers, are faced with the dilemma of having to satisfy women who hold such values if they want to get married. Moreover, cases have emerged in an endless stream in China of young women dependent on rich older men and acting as concubines (*ernai*). This reflects that women's position is so low that even women do not respect themselves. And what about men? Men, of course, look down upon women. There is a trend for some women to prefer passive reliance on men rather than on their own efforts in recent years in China. Although the people's values, which are plural and changes in essence, reflect that the Chinese people are not controlled by politics and have their ideas freely recently, their ideas are still influenced by the traditional concepts. The prevalence of "money worship" fully reflects that women are inferior to men socially and culturally as explained above that gender inequality permeates every aspect of society. People popularly accept the concept "men are the main breadwinner in the home" in the 21st century (Q. Ye, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). Within this context, women easily suffer psychological domestic violence because men consider that their partner should depend on them and be controlled by them. Raising people's awareness of equality between men and women is a very arduous task for society.

### Conclusion

This study, although it is a very small piece of the author's entire research, has shown that different non-verbal behaviors ("active" and "passive") as forms of psychological violence were used frequently and more or less differently (basically ignoring the Chi-Square test) by husbands and wives in conflict. Moreover, through the analysis, this study has found that there is likely to gender inequality in such non-verbal behavior between husbands and wives and that there was no significant

difference in these non-verbal behaviors between intellectual and non-intellectual families. Further, this study suggests that gender inequality, closely linked to factors such as history, society, and culture, might influence the choice of using non-verbal behavior by husbands and wives in conflict. Actually, this gender inequality represents power and superiority: men as dominate but women as subordinate. As explained in this article, wives passively responded to husbands' non-verbal abuse in conflict by shutting the windows and doors and remaining silent, which indicates that the husbands' violent behavior controlled the wives, while the wives were subordinate to the husbands. This research also suggests that the wives might be the main victims of "active" non-verbal behaviors "glaring" and "threatening with fists", while the husbands might be the main victims of "passive" non-verbal behavior "stamping of foot". This implies that wives may suffer psychological violence seriously because the "active" non-verbal behaviors may produce a strong effect on victims, leading either to actual physical violence or psychological damage. Overall, undoubtedly, gender inequality may exist in psychological domestic violence and women may be more likely to suffer this violence than men because men have been regarded as superior to women historically, socially and culturally, while women cannot be valued and respected by either men or the women themselves.

This study differs from the previous studies because it explored the specific forms of psychological domestic violence, which are normally ignored in research but actually have a powerful impact on victims (Goldstein, 2002). In particular, this study provided the key findings not only in relation to both husbands and wives, but also to couples at intellectual and non-intellectual levels, which was less emphasized in the previous studies. This study also introduces something new. First, wives just as well as husbands used non-verbal behavior (particularly "active" behavior) to their partners in conflict, although the extent to which they used these behaviors differed from that of their husbands. For example, 63.4 per cent of the wives (78/123) used "glaring" to their husbands (75.3%, 73/97) in conflict, and 12 per cent of the wives (15/125) used "threatening with fists" to husbands (23.2%, 22/95) in conflict. In particular, fists are usually seen as a symbol of power and are linked to men, but this result suggests that this exclusive linkage might not be wholly accurate. Second, non-verbal behavior might occur frequently be-

tween intellectual and non-intellectual families, but wives in the “College Education” group were likely to suffer psychological violence, particularly “glaring” and “threatening with fists”. Noticeably, such results were rarely shown in the previous Chinese studies.

This study is just the beginning of the author’s research career in the field of domestic violence. Thus, it is hard to avoid limitations in some aspects. For example, one limitation involved research design. The questions in relation to the non-verbal behaviors “glaring”, “threatening with fists”, and “stamping of foot” were posed in a questionnaire, with the result that these behaviors were not described in detail by the individuals in the depth-interview because the author lacked experience in asking follow-up questions when the subjects roughly narrated their sufferings, but luckily data was obtained regarding other non-verbal behaviors, e.g. non-communication, indifference, and silence, in both survey and qualitative interview. This therefore necessitated that this article discuss these three non-verbal behaviors without direct comparison with interview data. Another limitation involves the non-intellectual group (School Education). The majority of the survey data was collected mainly in schools, universities, and hospitals, which resulted in the number of non-intellectual respondents being quite small in comparison with the intellectual respondents. This therefore may lead readers to regret the lack of more powerful and persuasive discussion in this article, but this article could only provide relative results (not absolute ones) when discussing non-verbal behavior used/experienced by intellectual and non-intellectual families. The author should therefore carefully consider the choice of research sites in the future. Nevertheless, this research arrived at its aims, despite these limitations.

Finally, the author acknowledges that the whole society should do more in order to eliminate gender inequality and domestic violence. In particular, education is a key point for people in China. For instance, should a course against domestic violence be officially offered in schools and universities officially? Such a course may help students to understand the importance of stopping domestic violence and of eliminating gender inequality at an early age. People need to be aware that women should enjoy the right of life, study and work same as men. Exploration of domestic violence is an arduous task. All people should contribute themselves to this task for the sake of beautiful life in the future.

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