

# The Discussion of Formation Factors of Gender Violence in Heterosexual Marriage in Film *Night and Fog*

Yuting Xie<sup>1\*</sup>, Megat Al Imran Bin Yasin<sup>1</sup>, Syed Agil Bin Shekh Alsagoff<sup>1</sup>, Lay Hoon Ang<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Communication, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: \*shirley\_xieyt@hotmail.com, megat@upm.edu.my, s\_agil@upm.edu.my, hlang@upm.edu.my

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## Abstract

Combining gender theorist Raewyn Connell's concepts, this study analyzed formation factors of gender violence (in this case, mainly the violence that men to women) in heterosexual marriage in contemporary Chinese society. Through the analysis of a Chinese fact-based film case *Night and Fog*, this study found that the formation factors of such domestic violence mainly include men's hegemonic masculinity, women's attitudes of compromise, as well as the acquiescence in society related to cultural cognition. According to this, several countermeasures were also proposed to be referenced in improving such kind of social problem. Through an in-depth analysis of the realistic social case portrayed in specific Chinese film, this study aims to raise more social awareness and promote further academic studies about such marital violence issues especially husbands against their wives from the regional family field to the world domain.

## Keywords

Chinese Film, Gender Violence, Hegemonic Masculinity, Heterosexual Marriage, *Night and Fog*

## 1. Introduction

Gender violence in marriage, particularly violence by husbands against wives, is a critical social problem and is not a rare topic in modern society. It deserves high emphasis and thorough discussion today because it has far-reaching negative effects both on women and broader aspects. The direct one is its detrimental effects

on women's physical, mental, and sexual health (Campbell, 2002; Wang, 2006; Sarkar, 2008). Apart from endangering the well-being of individuals (Song et al., 2021), such violent problems will also impact the stability of families, communities, and societies to different degrees (Fineman, 2013; Holt et al., 2008).

Anderson (2021: p. 1021) once pointed out that "intimate partner violence affects 30% of ever-partnered women worldwide". Internationally, there is a growing pandemic in cases of domestic violence (Rauhaus et al., 2020). Bradbury-Jones and Isham (2020: p. 2047) also mentioned that "domestic violence rates are rising, and they are rising fast". In China, the prevalence of domestic violence also cannot be neglected. Fang (2011) claimed that the phenomenon of men's violence against their wives was common in China. According to one official statistic based on a nationwide survey from the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF, 2011) in 2011, 24.7% of married women in China have suffered at least one form of domestic violence from their husbands in their marriage in their lifetime. In a sampled study, 39% of Chinese women reported they experienced violence from their current or former intimate partners (Wang et al., 2013). Academic research has shown that the lifetime prevalence rate of family violence reported in the general population ranged from 10.2% (Cao et al., 2006) to 65.0% (Chen & Xia, 2015). According to reports from China by the World Health Organization (WHO) (2020), there is an increase in cases of domestic violence, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, even before this pandemic, the statistics on family violence in China are alarming as well (Zhang, 2022). Meanwhile, it should be noticed that there are a number of offences may go unreported (Yang et al., 2019). The argument by McCleary-Sills et al. (2015: p. 224) may reveal one of the reasons of such phenomenon that has always existed, that is, in relation to societal stigmas and cultural norms: "Because intimate partner violence is highly normalised, survivors are silenced by their fear of social consequences, a fear reinforced by the belief that it is women's reporting of intimate partner violence that brings shame, rather than the perpetration of violence itself. ... Even women who reject intimate partner violence as a 'normal' practice are blocked from action by powerful social norms. These constraints deny survivors the support, services and justice they deserve and also perpetuate low reporting and inaccurate estimates of intimate partner violence prevalence." In addition, in rural China, domestic violence against women is more serious than in urban areas, which is also mainly due to more conservative values in relatively undeveloped rural areas around patriarchal traditions and gender inequality (Xu & Ye, 1999). Certainly, apart from the reason of the enduring influence of traditional patriarchal values that emphasize male dominance and control over female partners, such phenomenon is also coupled with the limited responsiveness of relevant departments (Jiang, 2019; Lin et al., 2021; Michelson, 2019).

Objectively speaking, compared to previous times, societal awareness toward domestic violence in China has gradually enhanced in recent years. For example, politically, China passed the Chinese Anti-Domestic Violence Law in 2015 and

implemented it in March 2016 (Lin, 2024; Sun et al., 2022), which protects the rights of women legally; and practically, public awareness campaigns (both online and offline) become gradually popular in China, which raise the visibility of such crisis (Ertan et al., 2020). Another instance is that culturally, in terms of film production, contemporary Chinese filmmakers are increasingly portraying domestic violence, gender conflicts, or related social issues, which can be exemplified by *Battle of Memories* (Chen, 2017) which is a crime feature film involving domestic violence, *The Woman in the Storm* (Qin, 2023) that is the first anti-domestic violence film in China, and so on.

Regardless of these, it should be realized that domestic violence continues to be a problem in China (Mak, 2020). Zhang (2022) also pointed out the prevalence of family violence in China, and mentioned that some regional statistics and media outlets have reflected an increase in both divorce rates and overall violence. In 2024, there are still many reported serious criminal cases involving domestic violence especially from husbands to their wives, even happening between young highly-educated Chinese couples in cities. Consequently, apart from political, practical and cultural efforts, academically, more in-depth research is also imperatively necessary in excavating the inner logic of marital violence and trying to improve such social problems, whether happening in a particular regional area or worldwide.

Actually, nowadays, people still should not underestimate the impacts of the traditional Chinese male-dominated thoughts that were characterized by “men’s superiority to women” and “women are deemed as the attachments of men and have a lower family status”. Certainly, people should also realize that the factors that cause marital violence in reality are complex, which means that their formation is collectively induced by various reasons. Through a typical Chinese fact-based film *Night and Fog*, this study analyzed the formation reasons why men tend to use gender violence against women in the heterosexual family in contemporary China. Based on Raewyn Connell’s thoughts about marital violence that men to women is related to men’s temperament of hegemony, this study unfolds this topic from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity that the male protagonist presented in the film. Meanwhile, this study also analyzed other formation factors of gender violence in heterosexual marriage that were observed in this film. In light of these, several corresponding solutions are also proposed at the end of this study to raise awareness or practice by various sides and thereby mitigate similar social problems in reality as possible.

## 2. Literature Review

Domestic violence is a prevalent social issue in China, akin to many developed Western nations (Xue et al., 2024). Particularly, for China that own deeply ingrained cultural norms emphasizing male superiority and dominance which was rooted in China’s highly patriarchal structure of imperial history (Xue et al., 2024), stimulating the occurrence of domestic violence. It is obvious that such kind of

family violence is highly associated with men's masculinity.

In terms of the concept of "masculinity", it emphasizes that one's behaviours are rooted in what kind of person he or she is. [Connell \(2005b\)](#) argued that a masculine person would behave like being violent rather than peaceable, dominating instead of conciliatory and interested in sexual conquest. Masculinity is mostly used to describe men's personality of strong temperament and will. [Connell \(2005b\)](#) also said that normative definitions provided a norm that masculinity is what men ought to be. Similarly, positivist social science embraces this notion that masculinity is what men actually are ([Connell, 2005b](#)). [Connell \(2005b\)](#) also mentioned the idea of the male sex role. The strict sex role theory regards masculinity as a social criterion for men's behaviours. According to this theory, similarly, boys or men are "socialized" ([Breines et al., 2000: p. 23](#)) to be masculine and they are trying to obey the social stereotype of machismo. From these, it can be found that his notion needs to be put in a broader structure of gender relations to consider. It is not just a static state, but also positively reflects a regional culture involving values or beliefs that exist for a long period.

In multicultural societies, there may be multiple definitions of masculinity. Equally, more than one kind of masculinity can be detected in the existing culture ([Breines et al., 2000](#)). There are four major types of masculinity put forward by [Connell \(2005b\)](#): hegemonic masculinity, subordinated masculinity, complicit masculinity and marginalized masculinity. In many different circumstances, there are awareness systems that are shaped by different forms of masculinity within society. This definition also contributes to understanding the composition of social masculinity prototypes. For this study, it mainly focuses on the first type of masculinity, that is, hegemonic masculinity.

[Connell \(2005b: p. 77\)](#) once mentioned that the term "hegemony" originating from Antonio Gramsci's studies of class relations, means the cultural dynamics by which a group argues and maintains a predominant status in society. For the notion of "hegemonic masculinity" ([Craig, 1992: p. 190](#)), it stems from the recent work of gender sociology. It can be understood as a special category of masculinity to which women and others (the young, the effeminate, etc.) are subordinated rather than the male role ([Carrigan et al., 2018](#)). [Craig \(1992\)](#) perceived that hegemonic masculinity stood for the social ascendancy of a particular version or model of masculinity that operates on the territory of common sense, namely, conventional morality that terms what it means to be a man. [Connell \(2000a: p. 24\)](#) alleged that this kind of masculinity is a leading or "hegemonic" form of masculinity and the centre of the institution of gendered power. [Connell \(2005b\)](#) regarded it as the configuration of gender practices which reflects acceptable answers to the problems of the rationality of patriarchy at present and which embodies the dominance of men and the subordination of women in the sex/gender system.

Since [Connell \(2005b\)](#) defined the sociological concept of hegemonic masculinity, many scholars have paid attention to this field and cited her thoughts in

their studies, especially concerning men's violence involving masculinity. Merry (2011), for example, also deemed that one of the factors of men's violence against women was linked to the images of masculinity and power. In China, relevant research is just in the early stages. There are relatively few researchers who have studied hegemonic masculinity in relevant fields. Fang Gang is one of the earliest initiators and practitioners of the study on masculinity and men's movement in China. He incorporated masculinity into the violence in his research. In many of his academic studies, he referenced Connell's concepts and connected them with Chinese present situations. Fang (2011, 2016) assumed that a man who tends to present the feature of hegemonic masculinity was prone to use violence, particularly in heterosexual families, and, men's violent hegemony was partly related to their masculinity. Hong (2007) also proposed five characteristics of hegemonic masculinity in the gender domain: the power of the body and control, professional achievements, patriarchy in the family, pioneer spirit, and heterosexuality.

When connecting hegemonic masculinity with violence, one obvious presentation is in heterosexual families, particularly the husband against his wife and/or daughter(s). Such domestic violence that men to women belongs to a specific manifestation of gender violence.

Connell (2000b) assumed that violence was a relationship between bodies and a kind of power exercised directly on the body. Most of the analysis of gender-based violence assumed that this violence basically comes from the advantaged (mostly men) and is targeted mainly towards the disadvantaged (mostly women) (Walby et al., 2014). Men occupy a large proportion of violence to women, and predominate across the spectrums of marital violence (Connell, 2000a), including physical violence, sexual violence, and psychological violence in the family (e.g. battering, sexual abuse and marital rape) (Walby et al., 2014). In some cultures, men's violence becomes the representation of their power and of their driving forces, for domination and control. Men's violence has been culturally theorized as an expression of their predominant drive (Breines et al., 2000). Such violent behaviours reveal a close correlation with men's traits of hegemonic masculinity. Messerschmidt and Tomsen (2015) emphasized that violence always appeared in the construction of masculinity, as part of the practice by which men require respect, menace opponents, or attempt to occupy ascendancy. Violence is regarded as a measure for men to defend privileges and maintain superiority or preponderance, and sometimes, such idea was not only agreed by men, but also by most members of society.

For China, which has a long time being under patriarchal discourse system in history, violence also become a vital method often used by men especially those who have a tendency of hegemonic masculinity (Deng & Fang, 2017). It is still not uncommon in contemporary China. In some cultural concepts, hegemonic masculinity is sometimes linked with the male's characteristic of bravery, which thereby more forms confusion or wrong substitution in concepts. In Chinese society, although the traditional thoughts have changed a lot in recent years, male supremacy which emphasizes control, toughness and power still exists. Some

proverbs are still prevailing in China at present, for example, “Men act a crucial part in society while women in the family”, “Men have a superior status and women have a subordinated position”, and so forth. Affected by the traditional culture of patriarchy in history, there are still many Chinese people who identify with or passively accept this kind of discourse pattern (Chen, 2015). In China, the prominent types of men’s violence against women (particularly to their wives) also include physical violence, sexual violence, and mental violence as mentioned above, as well as economic violence and so forth. Later, in Chapter Four, based on these above-mentioned concepts in existing studies, more details about marital violence involving hegemonic masculinity will be thoroughly discussed with the specific presentation of the film case.

### 3. Method

This study mainly adopted the case study method, taking one Chinese fact-based film *Night and Fog* (Hui, 2009) as a case to analyze. Through this method, a macro topic such as a social problem can be put into a micro context or specific situation to discuss. Meanwhile, apart from film materials, this study also utilized secondary literature collected from various sources, ranging from journal articles, academic books, film reviews and so forth.

In terms of film *Night and Fog*, it was adapted from a real massacre of a wife murder case that happened in Hong Kong, China in 2004, and it narrated a tragedy that a man named Li Sen (played by Ren Dahua) frequently used violence against his wife Wang Xiaoling (played by Zhang Jingchu), even resulting in Wang’s death and the breakdown of the whole family eventually. In this story, Li Sen also once used violence against his two daughters. He will beat and scold his daughter due to dropping rice grains while eating or disturbing his rest. He even threatened his daughters, saying “If you don’t obey me, I will kill you”. In fact, before the final massacre, Wang once fled to a rescue centre after being abused. However, she received a call from Li Sen, threatening that he had bought a knife and that if she didn’t go home, she would never see her two daughters any more. She was worried that her daughters would be hurt, then she decided to go home and rescue the children by herself. However, when she returned home, Li Sen stabbed her with the knife in front of their daughters, then killed two daughters and finally committed suicide. Viewing these, this film that was adapted from a true Chinese incident of marital violence is a suitable case for this study to unfold and demonstrate the related topic.

## 4. Discussion of Formation Factors of Gender Violence in Heterosexual Marriage

### 4.1. Men’s Hegemonic Masculinity

From the film case, this study found that one of the formation factors of gender violence that husbands against their wives in heterosexual marriage is mainly due to men’s hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005b). This film mainly presented two

major forms of men's marital violence to women, that is, physical violence and mental violence.

In the field of power, men control violent means (Connell, 2005a). They also hold more rights of hegemony in their families or private lives (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In a patriarchal society such as some countries in East Asia, private violence is also masculinized or more prone to be used by men (Connell, 2000b). In this film, the director directly displayed men's physical violence toward women, which can be exemplified by the following scenes that show husband Li abusing his wife Wang by tape or the knife, and using sexual violence forcibly (Figure 1 and Figure 2).



**Figure 1.** The stage photos of Li's physical violence. [Annotation: Li used the tape to tie Wang's hands (the first two pictures) and tried to rape her (the last picture).]

In fact, it also can be discovered that physical differences between men and women are also one of the reasons that result in such violence and different forms of social gender patterns. Men are different from women in physiology. The reproductive differences are directly represented in the following aspects: physical force and speed (men: stronger and faster), sexual demands (men: having sex drive), characters (men: aggressive; women: nurturant), and so on (Connell, 2000a). Depending on the "aggressive advantages" (Connell, 2005b: p. 69) of the male body with strong physical strength, men easily take a leading role and show their supremacy, and power and govern by physical violence. To some degree, violence seems to be the direct form that power impacts on bodies (Connell, 2000b). In fact, the physical capacity to commit violence, for some men, becomes



**Figure 2.** The stage photos of Li's physical violence. [Annotation: During the process of sexual abuse at Wang, Li took a knife and tried to threaten her.]

a portion of their sense of masculinity, and they also tend to place their bodies into violence (Connell, 2000b). Some husbands with hegemonic masculinity believed that they had “rights” to use violence against their wives (Fang, 2016: p. 23), viewing it as essential to maintaining their masculine identity. Male batterers with hegemonic masculinity often support the backwards-looking views of women's domestic characters (Ptacek, 1988), and a controlled use or the threat of violence is regarded as part of their repertoire in solving their wives (Connell, 2002).

In this film, it can be easily found that it is exactly Li's hegemonic masculinity characteristic that causes his physical hurt or damage to Wang. More importantly, the marital violence this film reflects not only includes physical hegemony, but also incorporates mental hegemony. For instance, Li always blames Wang in daily life, such as “Without me, you wouldn't be what you are today”, “As a wife, you even cannot make a good meal”, and so on. From these words, it can be discovered that Li took traditional gender roles in families as granted that highly emphasized “Men outside and women inside”. He thought that his role as the breadwinner and this granted him authority and control within the family, and he agreed with women's attached or subordinating position in the family. In his view, it was the duty of his wife to do well in housework. If she disobeyed his rules, he had the right to use violence. The following pictures extracted from the film (Figure 3, Figure 4 and Figure 5) also show these.



**Figure 3.** The stage photos of Li’s mental violence. [Annotation: The top close-up shows Wang’s painful expression when Li said: “Without me, you wouldn’t be what you are today”. Li forced her to say the words that “Without you, I wouldn’t be what I am today” (the middle picture) and Li asked her to “Say the words aloud” during his abuse (the last picture).]



**Figure 4.** The stage photos of Li’s mental violence. [Annotation: Li drove Wang and their two daughters out of the house, and shouted that: “The girl from the country is useless” (the top picture); “Only eating without doing, and doing a little even breaking things” (the middle picture); “Get out! Don’t stay in front of my house gate shamelessly... (the last picture)”.]



**Figure 5.** The stage photo of Li's mental violence. [Annotation: Li said to Wang: "Believe it or not, I will kill you!"]

In this film case, this husband's violent behaviours and attitudes against his wife are highly related to his hegemonic masculinity or his desire to be such a sort of masculinity. These are present in his physical hegemony (including sex) and psychological hegemony to Wang. To some extent, marital violence shows such type of men's control over women, and their possessive privileges and dominance in the family. In contemporary China, men with hegemonic masculinity portray their "power" through marital violence to prove that they are so-called "tough guys" (Deng & Fang, 2017: p. 146). Such men acquiesce in their absolute initiative at home and they force their wives to obey them by violence. In Chinese traditions, the consensus of such patriarchy approved that the man is "a breadwinner" or "a protector in the family" and the woman is "a housewife", "a sex object", or "a child-rearing mother" (Hong, 2007: p. 187). Under such discourse, socialized hegemonic masculinity requires a strong male image characterized by courage, ruggedness and being beyond women. When one cannot meet these requirements with a successful career or in other ways, he will be derogated as "not like a man" by this kind of patriarchal culture. Thus, this also increases the percentage of perpetrating violence against their wives by those men who have such desire to be men with so-called masculinity, because such men will possibly vent their pressure through violence to satisfy their psychological needs of the socially so-called "like a man". In the film case, the behaviour that Li forced Wang to admit his dominant hegemonic position through various violence is partly in relation to these, involving his personality of hegemonic masculinity as well as his complicated psychology.

#### 4.2. Women's Attitudes of Compromise

Apart from husbands' (men's) characteristic of hegemonic masculinity, the wives' (women's) attitudes towards marital violence cannot be overlooked as well, which become another factor that leads to gender violence of men to women in heterosexual marriage.

In this film, it can be found that Wang, as a sufferer of violence, yielded to the traditional concepts of the patriarchal culture. Or to say, in some way, she could not jump out of the traditional system of male hegemony. For example, when a time people called her name, she blurted out without any consideration: "My

husband's surname is Li". This implicitly reflects her thoughts that women are attached to men in marriage or her acquiescence to that male-dominated social reality. Despite the reality that she had to bear dual torture: physical violence like battering or abusing (Figure 6 and Figure 7) and spiritual violence from her husband, she still chose to bear it and compromise. This may also be because of the fact that Wang was concerned and feared that Li would hurt their daughters. Moreover, she still tries to maintain her husband's image. One example is that after a kind neighbour suggested she seek help from others, Wang refused and said, "It's not good to let all neighbours know about such family affairs. He (Li) cares about his reputation" (Figure 8). This also reflects women's forbearance when facing such marital violence.



**Figure 6.** The stage photos of Li's physical violence to Wang (the top picture) and Wang's bodily injury—scars on her face (the middle picture) and bruises on her back (the last picture).



**Figure 7.** The stage photos of Li's physical violence and Wang's bodily injury. [Annotation: Wang ran to the downstairs and cried lonely after suffering sexual violence from Li. The second close-up shot shows that the wound is bleeding freely from her thigh to her calf.]



**Figure 8.** The stage photos of Wang’s refusal of a woman’s assistance. [Annotation: A warm-hearted woman came to help Wang after she was abused. She suggested Wang speak out; nonetheless, she refused and said, “It’s not good to let all neighbours know about such family affairs” (the first picture), and “He (Li) cares about his reputation” (the second picture).]

All of these shows that in Wang’s mind, Li was the centre of her life and she took herself as his property or subordinate (Huang, 2011). These, together with other relevant plots in the film, reflected that to some extent, the wife’s compromise to marital violence is equally important to the men’s hegemonic masculinity, which also results in the marital violence that men to women. In some way, whether positively or passively, women accept or admit the social structure of male dominance or male supremacy in families. It is their compromise of patriarchy (including in men’s hegemonic masculinity and men’s marital violence), that collectively sustains men’s rights and promotes the construction of their hegemonic masculinity in this male-dominated social pattern and thus contributes to men’s violence in heterosexual marriage.

Influenced by the traditional patriarchal culture, there are still many people including women themselves affected by ideas such as “men are superior to women”, “men should hold the initiative and women should be placed in a passive position” (Deng & Fang, 2017: p. 145), women were perceived as the attachments of men or men’s property (Breines et al., 2000), and so forth. In such context, the members of this society would be influenced by these sorts of thoughts more or less, which is what the next section wants to reveal.

### 4.3. Acquiescence in Society Related to Cultural Cognition

From this film, the phenomenon of men’s marital violence is also associated with the social awareness or consciousness towards men’s hegemonic masculinity and their violence related to cultural cognition in that society. In this film case, the acquiescence attitudes of Wang’s parents, communal councillors, and local policemen all reflect the epitomes of the conventional ideology in the male dominant society where patriarchal cultural norms are dominant.

For instance, Wang’s parents did not think that men’s violence against women

is an important thing, even though it was really normal and women should bear it. When Wang phoned her parents for spiritual consolation, her mother just replied, “In our county, it is common that men beat their wives. (Wang) Xiaoling, you need to bear it”. Here unfortunately, even her mother accepted the fact that her husband Li acted as an “abuser” to hurt Wang as a “battered woman” (Huang, 2011: p. 86). Similarly, councillors in Wang’s community also took such things for granted: in film, they told her that “It is your domestic thing, so we cannot intervene”. Even the local policeman also agreed that such domestic things are so trifling that cannot parallel those criminal cases: in the film, they said “Madam, such things are family disputes. We are policemen, and we are in charge of investigating the legal cases”. It implies that there is a long-standing solidified thought about the family position of men and women, and unequal gender fates in local Chinese society. This also made Wang have to accept the idea that it is normal that “men are dominated and women are subordinated” and continue to suffer various dehumanizing harm under patriarchal discourse.

From all these words (or film lines), it is obvious that male hegemony and men’s violent behaviours in families are acquiesced in some societies. The patriarchal family model and men’s marital violence deeply entrenched in social cognition, contribute to the men’s violence against women in marriage. Because of long-standing male dominance in Chinese tradition, the hegemonic violence that is highly related to men’s domestic dominant position (Fang, 2011), has been regarded as very normal and natural. In such a society, it is accepted or taken for granted that men (or husbands) with hegemonic masculinity conduct violence against women (or their wives) in marriage life.

In fact, men’s marital violence appears to have often resulted in physical harm or death, which is also shaped by social context and cultural meanings in specific areas (Merry, 2011). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) also pointed out that hegemonic patterns of masculinity were rooted in specific social environments. In many places of the world, there exist ideologies that justify men’s supremacy on grounds of cultural conventions, beliefs, etc. This situation also prevails in Chinese contemporary societies. Tracing back to the pre-modern period, male supremacy was remarkable, especially in the ruling class under the influence of Confucianism. One of the major features of Confucianism is the definite difference between the public (outer) space occupied by men and the domestic (inner) space taken up by women. These spaces were linked by a firm gender hierarchy that was dominated by men. This kind of traditional patriarchal culture and beliefs encourage men with “manliness”, “boldness” and “power”, and allow them to verify their supremacy status in violent ways in the family. Meanwhile, the values of women are inferior to the men. Therefore, to a certain extent, it conveys the thought that women should be obedient to governance by men (Fang, 2016) and should be put in a subordinate position. These values are easily internalized by the people who are located in such cultural contexts.

Overall, cultural cognition in society is also one of the formation of marital

violence related to hegemonic masculinity. Some gender-related cultural norms and values with traditional male supremacy cultivate such violence phenomenon through the default of gender inequity within the private sphere and the public sphere, which collectively cultivates men's unhealthy hegemonic masculinity and their behaviours of marital violence.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study illustrates the topic of hegemonic masculinity in marital violence. By combining Raewyn Connell's concepts with the Chinese social-cultural context at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it expounds on the formation factors that lead to marital violence. From this film, it can be found that men's marital violence toward women is related to men's hegemonic masculinity, women's compromise attitudes, and acquiescence in society related to cultural cognition, especially in the context of contemporary China. Although such situations gradually improved nowadays, there is still some social news about similar domestic violence or more serious crime incidents especially in husbands to their wives. In such gender crimes, women are the most common victims, and the perpetrators are mostly men. In view of these, this study still expects to reduce the social phenomenon of marital violence against women in reality and cultivate harmonious relationships between couples in families.

Aiming for the marital violence problem, this study proposed several suggestions based on [Connell's thoughts \(2000a\)](#). She once conceived that the arenas for the action to reduce masculinity violence should involve personal life, community life, cultural institutions and so on (2000a). More attention should be focused on female's helplessness and social cognition.

In the facet of marital relations involving private life, it is suggested that couples need to express their respective thoughts or demands reasonably and communicate with each other regularly. In the heterosexual family, it should develop an equal relationship between the couples and they have equal rights. Due to the constraints of traditional gender awareness, some Chinese women have been in a passive position in families for a long time. Therefore, both the husband and the wife need to be aware of the importance of gender equity and women's position in the family ([Zhang & Chen, 2014](#)). For Chinese men in particular, it is possible to develop positive and healthy masculinity involving sexual roles as well as family violence. Although each family is different in their mode of getting along, the couples can jointly explore a sort of suitable pattern where they can get well along with each other ([Zhang & Chen, 2014](#)).

In terms of society involving community and cultural institutions, it is proper for them to increase publicity of the rejection of family violence. More importantly, they need to improve their consensus, especially on gender equality. Therefore, the foundation of family mediation institutions in the community or women's aid institutions in the local area is necessary. More importantly, although the government or legal agency makes strong corresponding laws and regulations to protect

the rights of vulnerable groups (especially women) and to punish those family perpetrators, it still needs social cooperation to achieve this. Because the rise of social awareness is relevant to each individual.

Apart from suggesting men (especially husbands) and women (especially wives) reflect themselves, importantly, this study agreed that it is necessary for the entire society to improve the cultural consensus and then promote gender equality in reality to some degree. Meanwhile, this study admitted that it still has some deficiencies, which need to be improved or supplemented in the future. For example, this study is a single case study, and thereby its findings and corresponding discussions have a certain speciality. It just reflects a relatively atypical instance of domestic violence in the cultural and societal context of contemporary China, which cannot represent broader societal trends or cannot be applicable to a broader social scope. The experiences and related countermeasures proposed from this film case also may not be suitable for other places in the world. Besides, this study mainly relies on existing relevant literature and film materials, lacking primary data to support the findings, which also needs further practical examination and exploration. Regardless of these, this study still hopes that this study can provide certain references or reflections to relevant scholars or public readers.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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