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Listening to the Voice of Intimate Partner Violence Victims from Internet Discussion Forums

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Listening to the Voice of IPV Victims from Internet Discussion Forum

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Human trafficking and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) are all about power and control. Human trafficking is more likely to happen among vulnerable population, such the abused victims of IPV. Understanding the voice of IPV victims can facilitate successful trafficking prevention and intervention programs.

China is at the early stage of developing comprehensive national and local laws to protect victims. The agencies and other social resources are not able to fully meet IPV victims' needs. Public awareness and victims' self awareness about IPV are weak, especially about non-physical abuse. There are still conflicting thoughts between whether IPV is a community affair rather than a closed door affair and the responsibility of perpetrators rather than victims. The tactics and patterns of the perpetrator are not widely known by the public.

Data about human trafficking is hard to gather. There is little literature is about the Asian, specifically Chinese victims. Internet discussion forums are a convenient medium for IPV victims to exchange information and to rehabilitate from past trauma. This paper will address a plan on how to collect data from some Chinese internet discussion forums about the victims' voice and patterns of online informal peer support. The dialogs among internet users in a specific discussion forum will be analyzed. The data will explore cultural differences, family norm, or other safety concerns of victims. These data will be helpful for victim advocates to provide victim-centered service to victims in China, Chinese immigrants who are suffering IPV in US, and may also be helpful for future intervention plans to best empower Chinese victims.

Listening to the **VOICE of
Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Victims
from Internet Discussion Forums**

IPV vs HT

Victims of Human Trafficking (HT) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):

- Overlap
 - “Traumatized and vulnerable population were easy to be trafficked. “ - Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis
- Under “power and control”
- Similar mental factors (thoughts and feelings)
- Hard to be recognized
- Need awareness and help

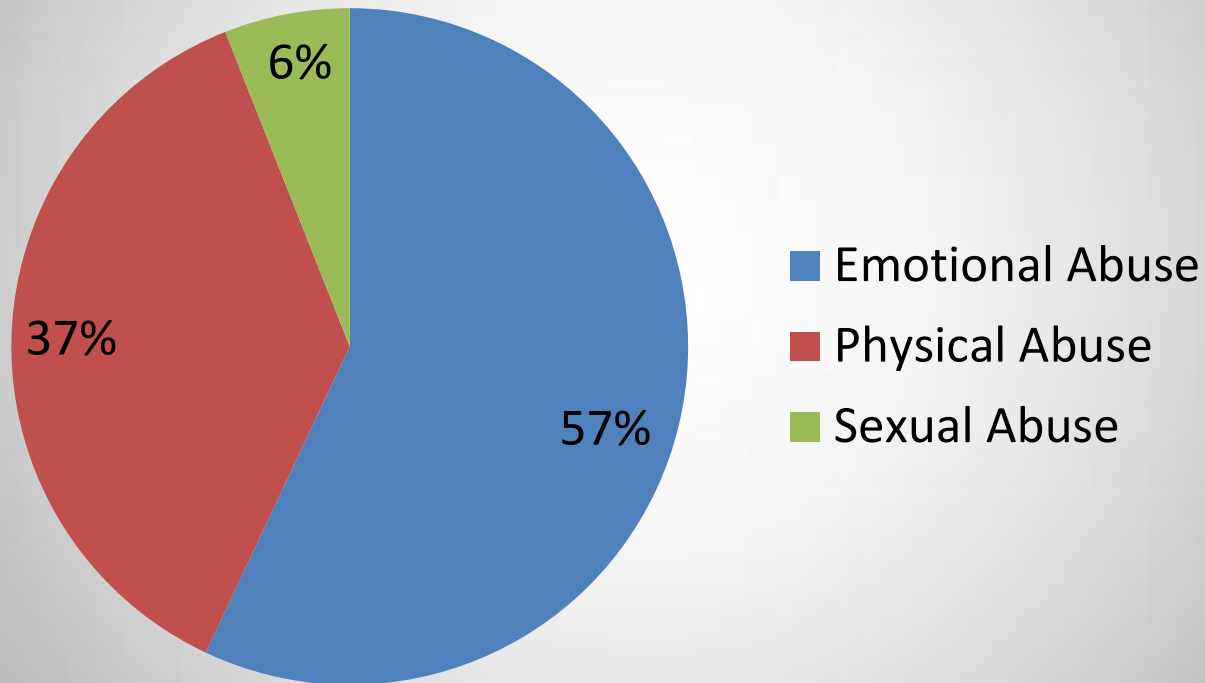
(Bryant-Davis, 2011)

Pervasiveness of IPV in China

- 64% of Chinese Adults
- 1/3 of Chinese Families
- Growing steadily

(Mclaughlin, 2011)

Pervasiveness of IPV in China



(Anti-Domestic Violence Network of China Law Society, 2010)

Dilemmas of Victims in China

- Victims in the US
 - Voice of Hope
 - Counseling
 - Shelter
 - Housing
- Victims in China
 - No where to go
 - No timely and effective protection

Dilemmas of Victims in China

- Stay
 - Suffering
- Run Away
 - Human Trafficking

IPV needs **AWARENESS!**

Victims need **Help!**

Awareness and Help

- Prevent IPV before it occurs
- Stop IPV while it is perpetrated
- Provide services to the victims afterwards

(Anti-Domestic Violence Network of China Law Society, 2010)

Culture Background

- History:
 - “China has hundreds of years where men were simply allowed to beat their wives. The culture is deeply rooted, and for many, it’s still taken for granted that women are inferior to men”
 - ~Xinjuan Wang, founder of China's first domestic abuse help center
- Closed Door Affair
- Respect of Privacy

(Mclaughlin, 2011)

Culture Background

- Confucianism:
 - Ren (Human-hearted and Considerate)
 - Yi (Righteousness and Appropriateness of doing things in social relationship)
 - Li (Respect the system of social hierarchy)
 - Men have higher social hierarchy than women
- Impact on IPV awareness and services
 - Ignore or normalize IPV

(Yip, 2004)

Culture Background

- Taoism:
 - Focus on the relationship itself – a changing process of growing and balance between hostile opposites.
 - Avoid conflicts
- Impact on IPV awareness and services
 - Do not protect the rights of victims
 - Intervention to IPV is for the happiness and harmony of family but not specific for victim

(Yip, 2004; Anti-Violence Website, 2012)

Cycle Of Violence

- Cycle Of Violence
 - Honeymoon Phase
 - Tension Building Phase
 - Acute Battering Incident Phase

(Walker, 2000)

Impact of Lacking of Public Awareness

- Legal System

- Lack of a separate, comprehensive, special anti-Domestic violence national Law
- Protection Order was first issued in 2008
- Hard to apply in judicial practice
- Emphasis on physical abuse, but not on emotional abuse
- Emphasis on punishment after violence occurred, but lack timely and effective intervention and prevention against on-going and recurring IPV
- Victim determination
 - Real Situation is not Clear
 - Gender Specific

(Anti-Domestic Violence Network of China Law Society, 2010; Legal Information, 2012; Chen, 2005)

Impact of Lacking of Public Awareness

- Traditional Formal Supporting Systems (exist before 1980's)
 - Police Department
 - Women's Federation
 - 88% only “keep records”
 - Resident Committee

(Shi, 2008)

Impact of Lacking of Public Awareness

- “New” Formal Supporting Systems (exist after 1980’s)
 - Help Center
 - Counseling Services
 - IPV Hotline
 - IPV Shelter

(Zhang, 2012)

Victims' Choices

Psychological Factors

- Battered Woman Syndrome
 - Victims are not able to leave the relationship
 - Victims are not able to take appropriate action to stop violence
 - Victims are not able to get any help
 - Victims feel isolated, helpless, and extreme fear.
- Learned Helplessness
 - Powerless to change
 - Severe depression and extremely low self-esteem
 - Major reason to stay

(Walker, 2000)

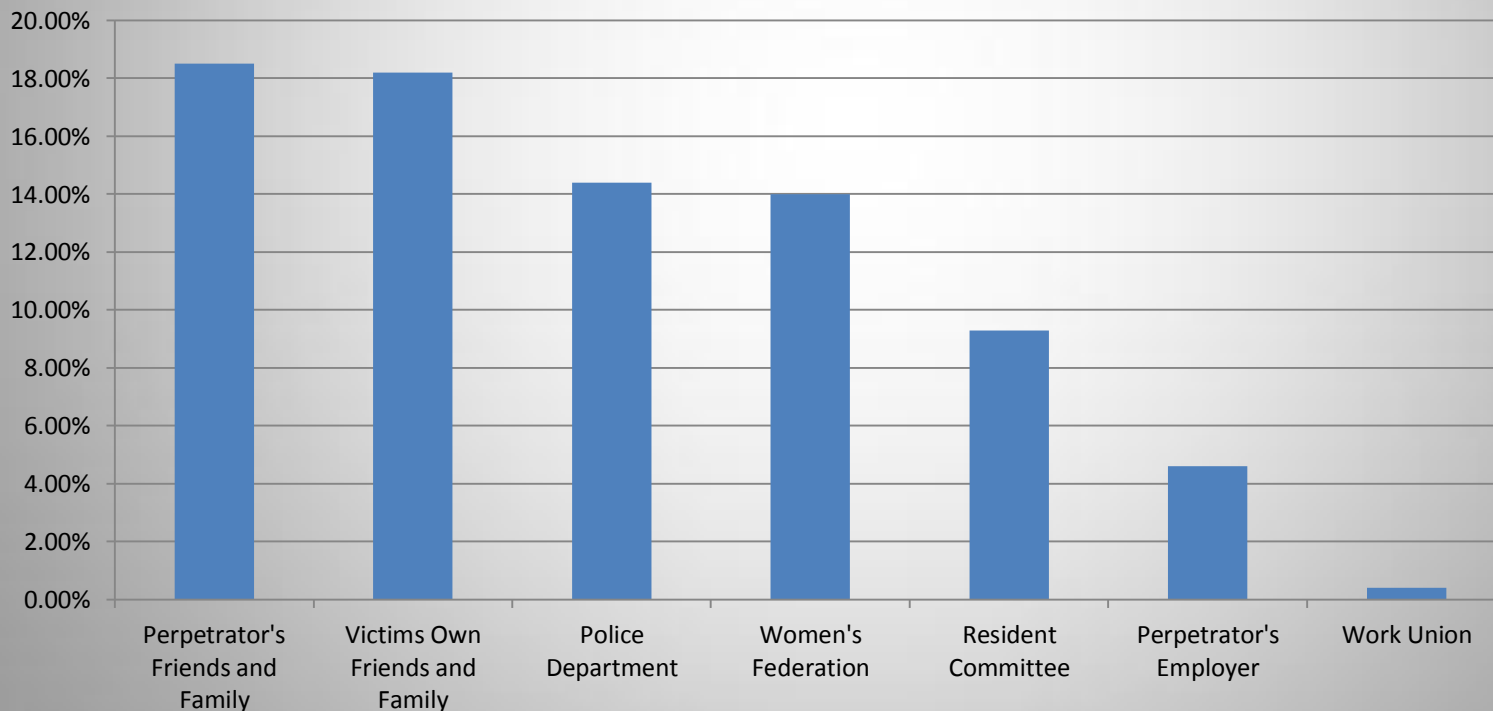
Victims' Choices

- Victims resist seeking outside help
 - Care about their reputation and “saving face”
 - Feel ashamed to talk openly and seek help

(Mclaughlin, 2011)

Victims' Choices

- Most victims tend to seek help from informal support systems after violence



(Shi, 2008)

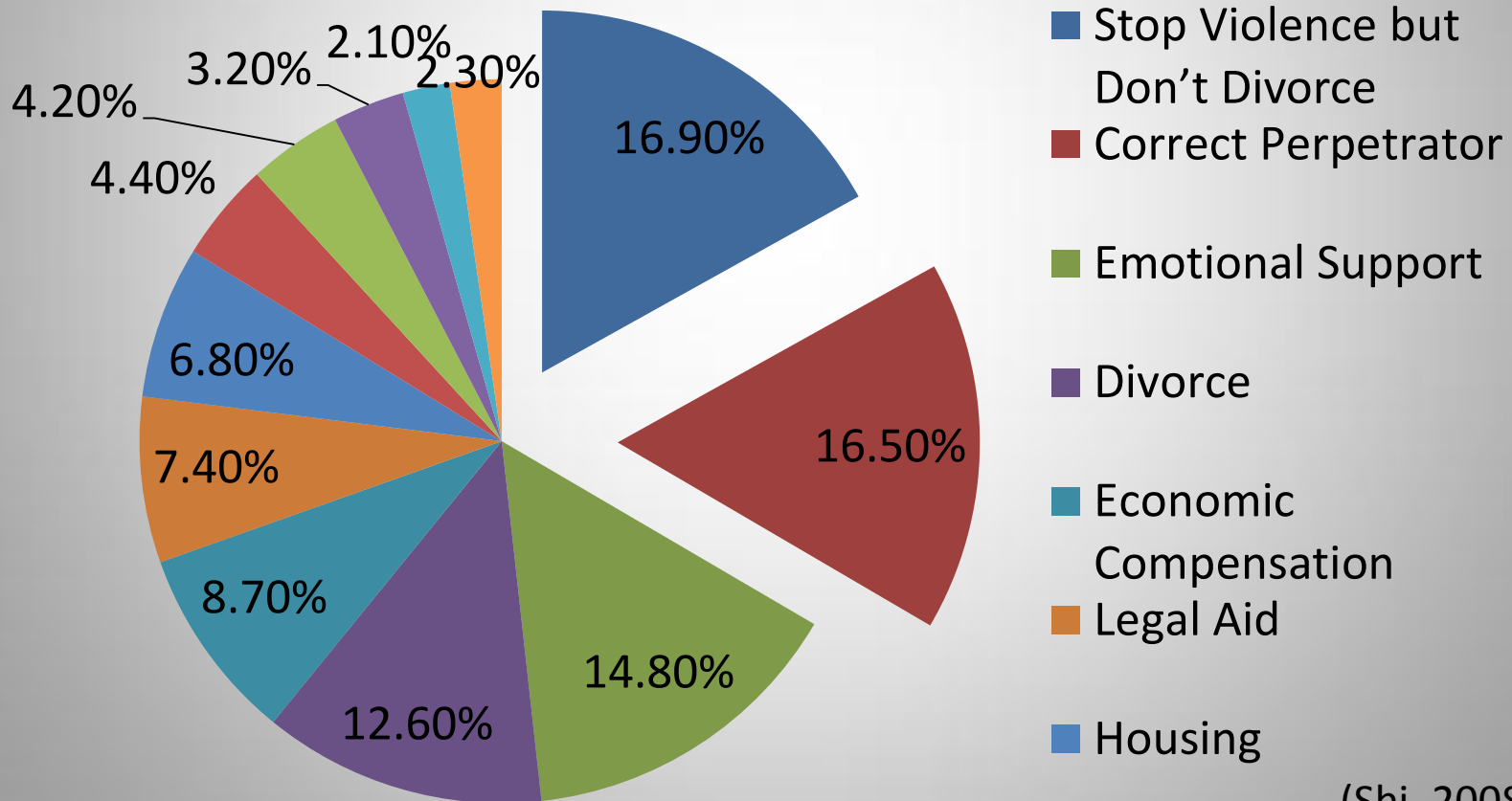
Victims' Choices

- Victims seek help from a formal agency only when they cannot tolerate violence anymore
 - “I cannot tolerate violence anymore”
 - “Perpetrator become more and more violent”

(Shi, 2008)

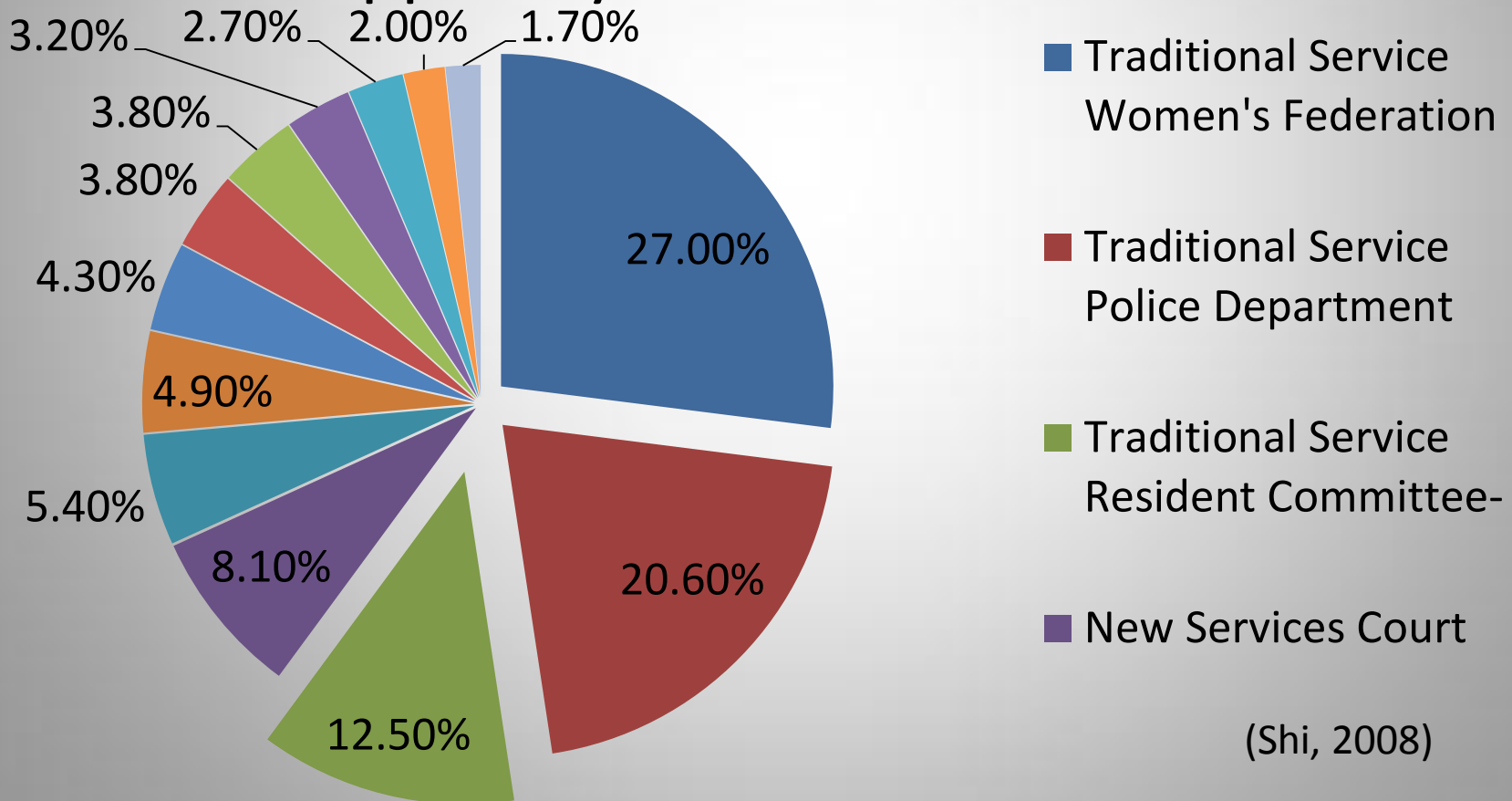
Victims' Choices

- The expectations to the outcome of help



Victims' Choices

- Victim's willingness to get help from formal social support systems:



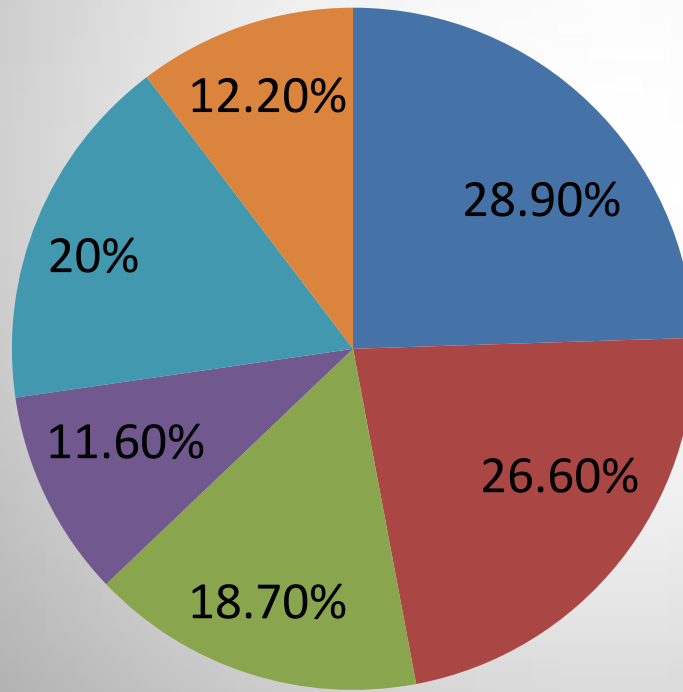
Victims' Choices

- Shelter
 - Almost Empty in Mainland China
 - Few Asians in US Shelters

(Zhang, 2012)

Victims' Choices

- The Outcomes after the Intervention from Formal Agency



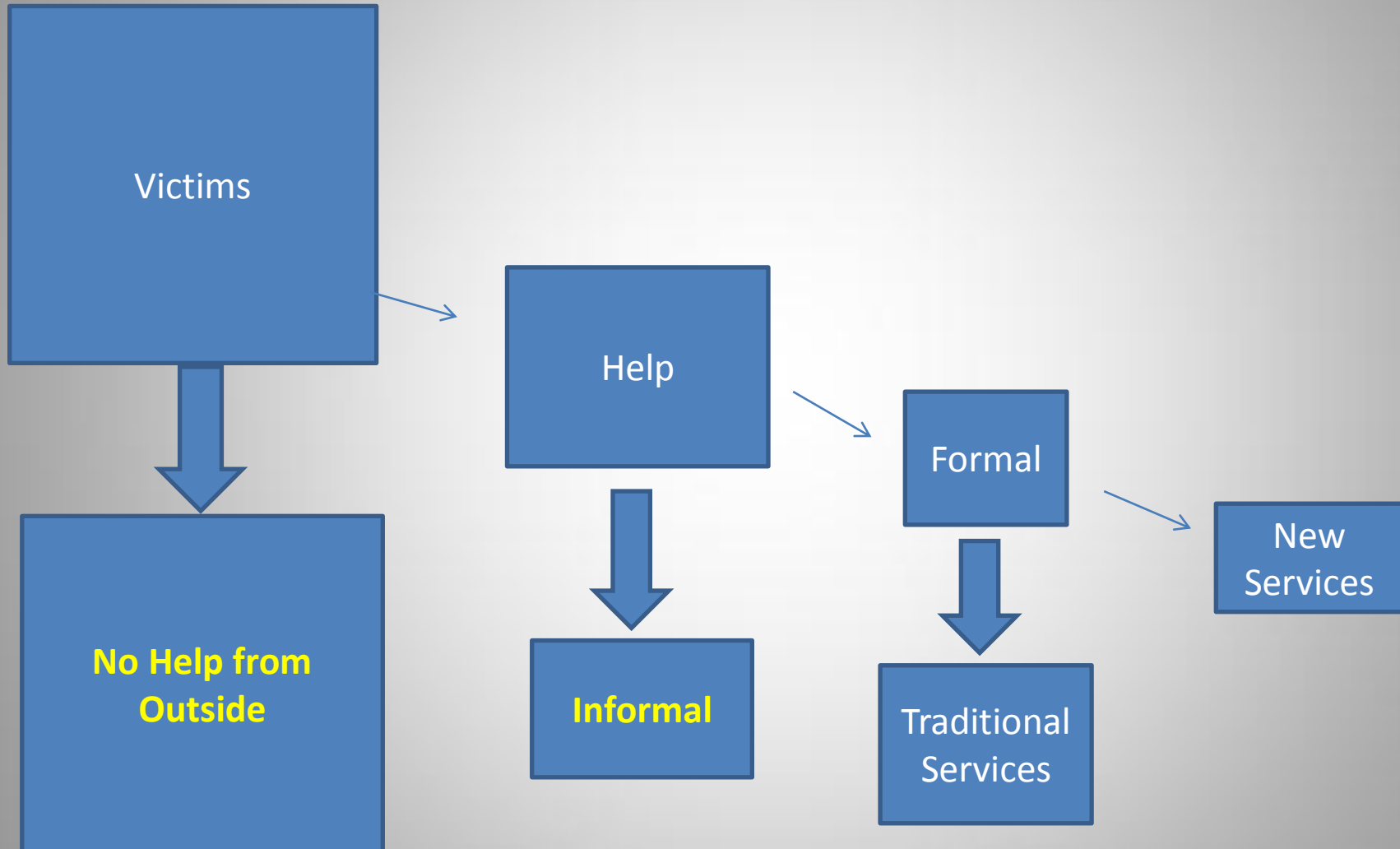
■ Violence Decreases but Not Stops

■ Violence Stops

■ Violence Stops Temporary but Recurrences Soon

■ Violences does not Decreases nor Stops
(Shi, 2008)

Victims' Choices



Victims' Voice

- How to help those victims
 - Who do NOT choose to go to agency to seek help and are suffering
 - Who are in the early stages of abuse
 - Who are isolated socially
- What are the victims' voices?
- What kind of help do they need?
- How to provide that help?

**First Step is to
Listen to the Voices of Victims**

Internet Discussion Forum

is a good place to listen to

The Voices of IPV Victims

Voices of Victims from IPV

- In Internet Discussion Forum
 - IPV victims write:
 - Early Stages IPV
 - Ongoing IPV
 - Recurrence of IPV
 - Emotional Pain
 - Things never mentioned to parents or “friends”

Voices of Victims from IPV

- Internet forum is a place for victims to seek:

Hope

Love

Control of Life

Some Concerns about Victims' Voices



Hope

- False Hope
 - Focus on maintaining toxic relationship
 - Ignore victims' safety and dignity

False Hope

- False Hope Leads to
 - Victims try to STAY in the abusive relationship
 - Victims confront perpetrator
 - Victims become addicted to drugs or alcohol abuse
 - Victims commit suicide
 - Victims choose to participate in illegal activities to please the perpetrator

(National Woman Abuse Prevention Project, 1997)

False Hope

- Victims believe:
 - Victim is wrong and guilty
 - Victim is able to change perpetrator and relationship
 - Victim is responsible for changing perpetrator and relationship
- These thoughts lead victims to have extreme low self-esteem, depression, and stress.

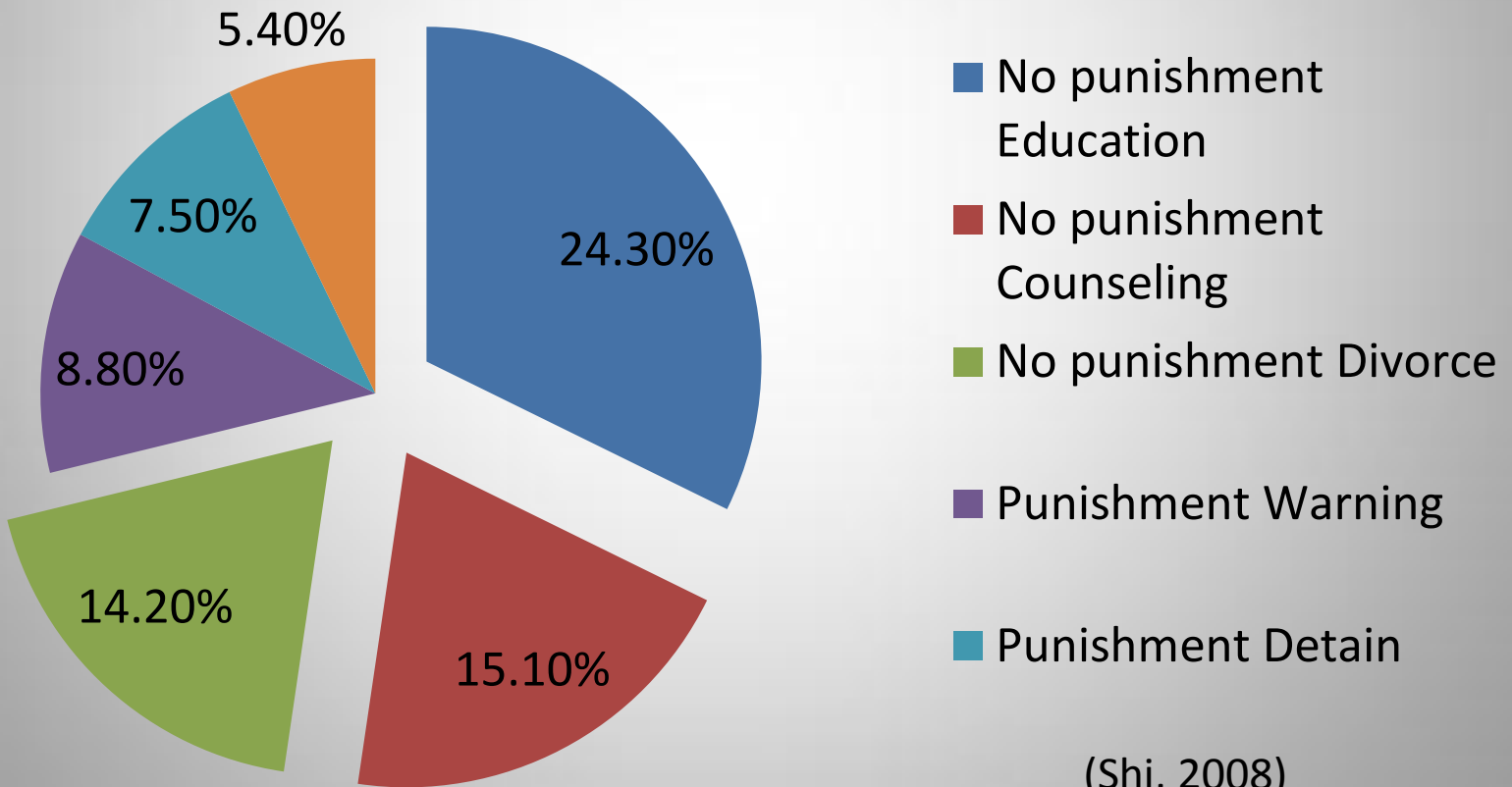
Toxic Love

- Toxic Love
 - Wish the perpetrator to meet victims' needs to be loved
 - Cling to perpetrator's "love" in "Honeymoon Phase "
 - Ignore "Tension Building Phase" and "Acute Battering Incident" in the Cycle of Violence
 - No awareness of perpetrator's abuse and manipulation tactic

(Walker, 2000)

Toxic Love

- Victims tend to prefer lighter or no punishments for their perpetrators



(Shi, 2008)

False Control of Life

- False Control of Life
 - Victims try to control the behavior of perpetrator
 - Victims try to control the relationship and situation

Voices of Victims from IPV

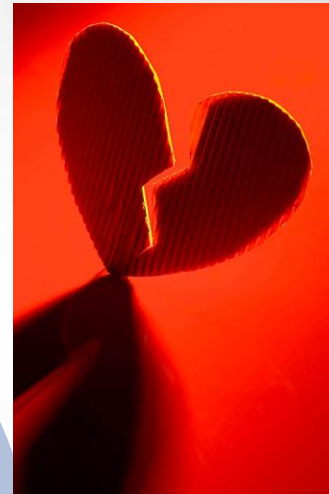
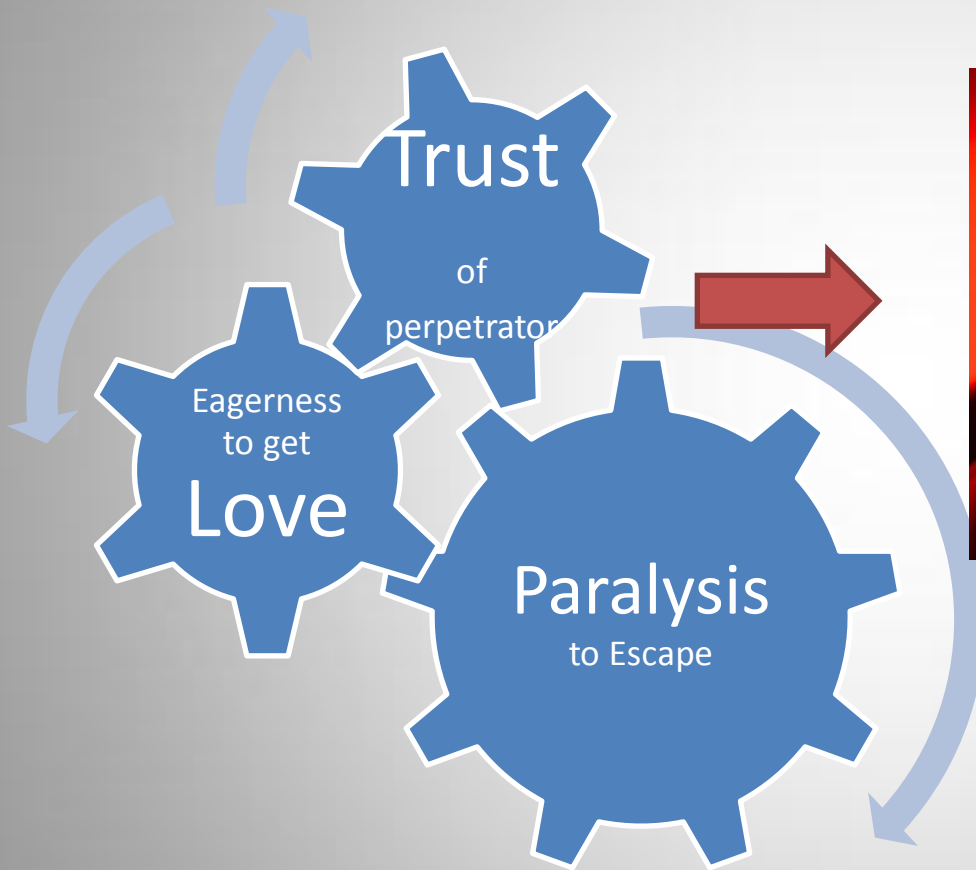
False Hope

Toxic Love

False Control of Life



IPV & HT



Low Self Esteem
Being Manipulated
Emotional Trauma

... ..

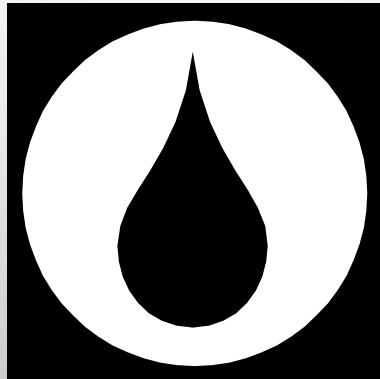
Please compare these mental factors of IPV victims with those of Human Trafficking victims



Voices from HT

- “When your soul is sold out, you will stick with one belief, no matter how you are kicked out, abused, that man is your savior. ”
–from a victim of Human Trafficking
- “Keep her (victim) exhausted and hungry, she will do whatever I want her to do!”
– from a perpetrator of Human Trafficking

Concerns about some “Helps” to Victims



Concerns about some Helps to Victims

- The goals of “helps”:
 - To help victims to achieve what they want
 - Save the relationship
 - Improve loving attachment
 - Providing coping strategies for resilience
 - » Assertive tone
 - » Changing victim’s expectation to her partner

Concerns about some Helps to Victims

- Assumptions of those Suggestions:
 - Relationship and family's value > Victim's individual value and right;
 - Victim's safety boundary is flexible or ignored;
 - Perpetrator and the quality of relationship will change if the victim changes;
 - Maintaining the relationship is victim's responsibility

Concerns about some Helps to Victims

- Judgments of Victims:
 - Victims are codependent and needy
 - Victims are wrong
 - Victims should confront perpetrator when in conflicts
 - Victims should take all the responsibilities for the quality of relationship

Who are “helpers”?

- “Helpers” are usually
 - not professionals
 - are not aware of the existence of abuse in the relationship, the cycle of abuse, and the mental factors of victims
 - do not understand the empowerment strategies for other victims
 - man or woman
 - victims at different stages

An Example

- A real story online:
 - The first year: emotional abuse
 - The second year: emotional abuse
 - The third year: physical abuse

Significance

- Early Intervention and Proactive Prevention
 - Understand the mental factors and ongoing situations of victims
 - Identify the problem earlier
 - Provide timely, professional, and effective intervention and prevention
 - Against on-going and recurring IPV before any punishment has to be used

Significances

- Service
 - Victim-Centered Services to
 - Victims in China
 - Chinese immigrants who are suffering from IPV in US and other countries
 - Asian population
 - Future Intervention Plans
 - To Best Empower Victims
 - Male Victims

Significances

- Research
 - Victim's Behavior Research
 - Victims Involvement in Research
 - Awareness
 - Empowerment
 - Improve Service

(Ruanzeng & Songchen, 2003)

Data Collection and Analysis Plan

Research Setting

- Some public online discussion forum
 - Regarding issues of intimate partner relationships, including intimate partner violence (IPV)
 - Registered user is able to initiate a thread and reply to the threads of others
 - Each user has an anonymous profile with real or fake location, photos, self-introduction, preferences, and joined groups
 - User name can be changed once a month
 - User can resign him/herself voluntarily at any time
 - Every posting in the forum can be read by any registered or unregistered user in the world at any time

Data Inventories

- One user's all online activities
 - Initial postings
 - Responses to others
- One poster's all replies from different responders
- All the participants' demographic and relationship background
- Different themes in the discussion forum

Research Methods

- Discourse Analysis
- Traffic Analysis
- Social Network
- Content Analysis
- Category Analysis

(Chang & Chang, 2011; Gee, 2011)

Thank You!

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