

A STUDY ON COMPASSION FATIGUE AMONG PROFESSIONALS WORKING  
WITH CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE SURVIVORS IN MAINLAND CHINA

Aoxuan Cao

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Master's Thesis Committee

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John Parrish-Sprowl, PhD, Chair

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Ronald M. Sandwina, PhD

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Elizabeth Goering, PhD

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A STUDY ON COMPASSION FATIGUE AMONG PROFESSIONALS WORKING  
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Compassion fatigue is an outcome showing a series of popular negative symptoms with an engagement of empathy among caregiving professionals. To fill the gap of related study among professionals working with child sexual abuse survivors in China, the qualitative research method was performed through nine in-depth interviews with four social workers, three psychological counselors, one lawyer, and one prosecutor. The four main results are: professionals are facing challenging working environments; professionals have intense psychological distress; professionals are not aware of their mental status; professionals are not engaged in self-care. In further discussions, the reasons for and implications of the results are explored. First, professionals are at risks of compassion fatigue. Second, cultural and social ideologies affect professionals work in helping child sexual abuse survivors; such barriers can generate compassion fatigue. Third, the language used for (child) sexual abuse impacts social ideology towards sexual abuse and sexual abuse victims. Fourth, undeveloped legislation cannot provide solid backup for professionals' work. Fifth, there is an absence of cooperation between the public security organs and intervention service providers. In conclusion, people must be alert to compassion fatigue among professionals working with child sexual abuse survivors. The society also needs to sweep potential barriers of professionals' work from the cultural and social ideologies. Moreover, legislation should refine to build school protection system and boys sexual abuse protection.

John Parrish-Sprowl, PhD, Chair



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## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

Child sexual abuse (CSA) has become one of the most significant public health issues around the world. According to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2017) in the United States, there were 683,000 victims of child abuse and neglect reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) in 2015 (CDC, 2017). Another report from the US Department of Health and Human Services (2017) showed that among these children, 57,286 experienced sexual abuse (2017). In the China mainland, public records reported 317 cases involving over 750 victims in 2018; 378 cases in 2017; 433 cases in 2016; 340 cases in 2015; 503 cases in 2014; and 125 cases in 2013 (Girl's Protecting, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, & 2019). These numbers are calculated on the public report, not mentioning the hidden victims.

A large number of studies in the past twenty years have revealed that children who experience sexual abuse are at risk of a wide range of medical, psychological, behavioral, and sexual disorders, including depression, anxiety, anger, as well as self-esteem and self-concept impairment (Maniglio, 2009). Behind these CSA victims/survivors and their problems is a significant demand for professionals. Research has shown that professionals working with CSA survivors are also “at risk for developing negative symptoms associated with burnout, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder” (Potter et al., 2010). This type of negative influence on professionals has been widely understood as compassion fatigue.

### **Origins of Compassion Fatigue**

Joinson (1992) used the term “compassion fatigue” to describe the outcome of the inability to deal with stress among caregiving professionals and explained how “emotionally devastating” it is.

Figley (1995), a scholar who has developed the concept of compassion fatigue, regarded it as exchangeable with burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Burnout was defined by Maslach (1982) as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.” According to Maslach and Jackson (1980), burnout progresses in three stages. First, burnout starts from emotional exhaustion, feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one’s work. Second, burnout impacts personal accomplishment, feelings of competence and achievement in one’s work with people. Third, burnout shows professionals’ depersonalization, their unfeeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one’s care or service.

Secondary traumatic stress was defined by Figley (1993) as “the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other—the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.” According to Cunningham (1999 & 2003), secondary traumatic stress includes four domains. First, professionals experience denial. They are primarily in denial about their feelings, their existence, and their abilities. Second, professionals experience anger. They are angry with those who violate children, those who do not protect children, the general society that let CSA cases occur, and individuals who question abuse. Third, professionals experience sadness towards their view of the world and humanity changes. Fourth, professionals try to develop resolutions.

On the contrary, many scholars have gradually realized the differences between compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and burnout. Meadors, Lamson, Swanson, White, and Sira believed a primary difference between compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress was the “name of the different concepts” (2010). Compassion fatigue

emphasizes an engagement of empathy, while secondary traumatic stress does not require one to be aware of or sympathize with the other; compassion fatigue is a concept for caregiving professionals, while secondary traumatic stress is more general. In addition to their theoretical differences, Meadors and colleagues (2010) found that burnout and secondary traumatic stress each uniquely differentiates from compassion fatigue by applying a correlational design and a hierarchical linear regression analysis to the quantitative data collected from 167 health providers. The difference between compassion fatigue and burnout also lies in their attitudes toward empathy and caregiving professionals. Sprang and Clark's (2012) study also proved the difference between compassion fatigue and burnout. They found rural clinicians experienced higher levels of burnout instead of compassion fatigue. They suspected the harsh environment, and overwhelming duties that rural clinicians were facing may even disturb their generation of empathy and engagement, which are keys to compassion fatigue occurrence.

### **Professionals with Compassion Fatigue**

When Joinson (1992) regarded compassion fatigue as “unavoidable” for caregiving professionals, Figley (1995) believed that not everyone develops compassion fatigue, but trauma workers are more susceptible. Bourassa concluded that compassion fatigue is likely to affect professionals working with traumatic events such as “physical and sexual abuse, rape, natural and man-made disasters, and any other disturbing life-events that have the ability to harm a person” (2009). For example, Bourassa found compassion fatigue among Adult Protective Services (APS) social workers, who deal primarily with “crisis intervention for life-threatening conditions” such as the CSA issue. Figley (1995) specifically mentioned that caregivers develop compassion fatigue when facing children

with trauma, which always occurs among professionals working with CSA. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that professionals working with CSA are at risk of developing compassion fatigue.

Figley (1995) agreed with Joinson (1992) that compassion fatigue was unavoidable for trauma workers. When trauma workers hear stories from clients with trauma, the requirement of engagement in their profession first moves them to care for the clients' life, then be further absorbed in their experiences, leading workers to re-experience the clients' trauma. Figley (2002) further explained three additional catalysts of compassion fatigue occurrence: prolonged exposure, traumatic recollections, and life disruption. Respectively, a professional can control compassion fatigue by having long breaks between each client, avoiding meeting specific cases that evoke their traumatic experience, and trying to manage life well including turning to colleagues if possible.

### **Compassion Fatigue Studies in China**

Compared to the various focus in the United States, most compassion fatigue studies in China are targeting health providers in clinical settings. Combining western literature and China's practice, Li (2011) designed a Health Care Providers' Compassion Fatigue Scale with six dimensions—mental stress, loss of passion, negative behavior, apathy, doubt of ability and loss of ambition. By surveying health providers (doctors and nurses, exact number unknown) from three hospitals in Sichuan and Chongqing, China, Li found that health providers experienced a middle level of compassion fatigue with the highest fatigue in loss of passion.

More studies have been conducted in other clinical departments. Zhang (2014) surveyed 193 nurses in ICU in Shandong, China. She found that ICU nurses had a middle



level of exhaustion, low level of compassion satisfaction, and a high level of burnout, which showed that they experienced a middle level of compassionate fatigue. Chen, Wu, and Tian (2014) surveyed 152 nurses in Emergency Rooms (ER) in Shanghai, China. They found that ER nurses experienced a middle level of compassion fatigue, among whom nurses in Emergency Aid Rooms and Emergency Infusion Rooms experienced the highest compassion fatigue. The new trend of compassion fatigue studies in China is moving from clinical caregivers to other professionals. Luo and Li (2017) appealed to researchers to notice compassion fatigue among police officers because their job is mandated under law, working with aid and enforcement, as well as facing emergency and urgency.

However, no compassion fatigue studies in China mainland that are directed at professionals working with either general sexual abuse survivors or CSA survivors can be found. There are some studies about traumatic behaviors among these survivors such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), “a psychological disorder associated with a stress response from directly experiencing a traumatic event” (APA, 2002; cited from Meadors, 2010). The performance of PTSD has similarities with compassion fatigue in reacting to stress from a traumatic event.

Sui (2010) surveyed 946 females in Guangdong and was the first to find that around 41.51% of rape survivors experienced PTSD. Sui believed that social support systems and individual’s coping strategies could significantly impact PTSD occurrence among sexual abuse survivors. Luo (2000) applied a social construction perspective and studied 36 women rape survivors in Taiwan. Although Taiwan and China mainland are two geographically separated locations, they share the same Chinese cultural system. Luo identified eight themes among these rape survivors under this specific culture: shame over

the loss of virginity or chastity, self-derogation in the a priori attribution, rape disclosure fear and anxiety, self-derogation in sexual interaction, guilt in denigrating the family honor, self-scrutiny and self-blame in attribution, victim ridicule and victim blame, repeated victimization assailant, and rape-induced marriage proposal and acceptance. However, despite the psychological issues some sexual abuse survivors are experiencing, the characteristic of current interventions in China is prioritizing physical harm (injury) instead of psychological harm (trauma); prioritizing program instead of emotion; prioritizing syndrome instead of environment; prioritizing contingency instead of prevention; with each section working separately (Sui, 2010).

Neglecting sexual abuse survivors' negative emotions, especially PTSD syndromes can further cause harmful effects. Sui (2010) used voxel-based morphometry to explore changes in brain gray-matter density (GMD) by 1.5 T high-resolution functional magnetic resonance images (fMRI) and found that PTSD samples performed abnormally in emotion, cognition and attention control. As compassion fatigue and PTSD showed similar performance, although not accurate, it is possible that people with compassion fatigue are also unable to control their emotion, cognition, and attention successfully. For a professional, such performance can have an impact on their work. Zhang's study (2014) found that the more ICU nurses experienced compassion fatigue, the less they received job cognition, which can eventually cause them to leave their profession.

Even though many studies in China have discussed PTSD, PTSD is not the same as compassion fatigue. People with PTSD directly experience the traumatic event. However, compassion fatigue sufferers do not experience the traumatic event themselves but know of the traumatic event from their caregiving profession (Figley, 2002).

## **Professionals Working with CSA Survivors in China**

### **Lack of Professionals**

Rarely does an independent department focus on supporting only sexual abuse survivors in China. When a CSA case occurred, the victim can turn to the community, where local Women's Federation (a branch of the All-China Women's Federation responsible for working with women and children) and social workers can help. If the victim decides to call the police, the child victim will be sent to juvenile court in the lawsuit, where a professional counselor is provided. If the victim is in the financial crisis, they can turn to non-profit organizations such as social workers' organizations, foundations, public interest law firms, etc. If the victim is available to afford more professional service, they can turn to private psychological counselors. However, all the organizations and professionals mentioned are not targeting sexual abuse issues. While dealing with other affairs, serving CSA survivors is a part of professionals' work, which rarely happens. The lack of related training and expectation in their work put them at risks of compassion fatigue.

Without a clear plan of reactions to CSA cases, professionals lack of prompt cooperation:

For example, the judiciary has limited staffing and heavy task handling and is unable to cope with a large number of psychological counseling work for victims. The public security, Prosecutors Office, and court departments have not yet formed a "one-stop" protection system. Although the Prosecutors Office and court departments have specialized institutions, they are not for the public security organs, so the best time for these minor victims to accept psychological intervention or counseling service fails. (Zhang, Sha, Zhu, & Wang, 2017)

## **Collectivism in the Workplace**

Unique culture in China mainland has created a distinctive working environment for professionals working with CSA survivors: an emphasis on collectivism. On the one hand, collectivism support can release stress. A random search on a social worker recruiting website showed that 4 out of 10 opening social worker positions provide dormitory to the employer. Working and living with colleagues create intimacy and trust among social workers, which can improve communication. On the other hand, collectivism can hinder individual expressions. According to Huang, Davison, and Hu (2008), knowledge sharing intentions among Chinese are more affected by cultural factors including face and guanxi (relationship) than by personal attitude. Therefore, it is possible that the Chinese professionals are tend to hide their personal attitudes in work and behave in a “professional” manner. When working for such high dignity professions, seeing themselves as responsible and stronger helpers for the victims, Chinese professionals tend to push themselves too much to save face and not fail the public.

## **Child Sexual Abuse and Suvivors in China**

### **Cultural Themes in the Society**

Luo (2010) identified eight cultural themes among sexual abuse victims, three of which can be referred to children victims.

### ***Shame/Stigma over Virginity Loss***

The first theme is the sexual shame over the loss of virginity or chastity stigmatize child sexual abuse victims. This ideology usually connects with virgin worship. In ancient times, pre-marital probation prevailed, that is, the husband or relatives would test whether the newly married wife is a virgin—whether the husband has the “first-time use right.”

This ideology regards the woman as an item for a man, and who should be a “new item.” If been used, the item cannot sell a good price.

### ***Self-Derogation***

The second theme is the self-derogation in the a priori attribution. This theme relates to the chastity ideology and possibly a metaphor for hymen damage. In the previous example, if comparing the woman to an item, them hymen is the label on it, determining whether it has been unwrapped and used. Hymen damage from sexual abuse especially penetration behavior may cause the victim a feeling of broken self, and further feel the third theme—the sense of guilt in denigrating the family honor.

### ***Victim Ridicule/Blame***

The third is the victim ridicule and victim blame. The intentional or unintentional blame to the child sexual abuse survivors can cause secondary trauma to children or raise trauma for those who could not have remembered the event. Meanwhile, such harm on the child sexual abuse survivors is from the outside environment that professionals can barely help.

## **Negative Social Ideologies**

### ***Patriarchy and Parent Power***

Social ideologies in the hierarchy such as patriarchy and parent power hinder professionals’ direct connections with the child sexual abuse victims. The patriarchy of “woman is an item of man” was explained above. The parent power ideology is similar, believing that children are an item of parents, the latter who can control the former.

### ***Picking Yin and Yang***

The typical scholastic chemistry in ancient Chinese Taoist ideology is “picking yin and yang,” a theme in Taoist sexual practices, or bedroom arts. This theory refers to a spell that adopting women (with Yin) to refill men (with Yang) through coitus, which means that women are the tonic for men to prolong their lives (Zhang, 2016). Some theories even believe that the virgin is the best with Yin, which leads to hymen worship above.

### ***Gender Stereotypes***

In Confucious value system, there has always been a preference for boys over girls and the idea that women should follow the rules at home and men should work outside. Such gender stereotypes have shaped fragile women and regarded men as strong. He (2012) believed that such a culture could be a reason for lacking the protection of male sexual rights because people generally assume men are stable enough. Even when sexual abuse towards men happens, men are too embarrassed to disclose.

### **Ambiguous Languages Used**

Entering the 21st century, media, especially digital media is blooming and has radiated a significant influence on people. The Statistical Report on the Development of China’s Internet, released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC, 2018) on January 31, 2018, reveals that by the end of 2017, Chinese netizens reached 772 million. According to the latest national census (National Bureau of Statistic, 2011), the overall population in China is 1370 million, which means Chinese netizens account for 55.8 percent of the country’s total population and is 4.1 percentage higher than the global average. With this massive number of netizens, digital media in Chinese can reflect and

impact the way the Chinese thinking about health issues, especially child sexual abuse or sexual abuse in this research study.

The language people use for the act of sexual abuse can reflect people's mind. "Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get along in the world, and how we related to other people" (Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M., 2008). Sometimes mass media perform as popularization press. Popularization as an approach "involves a re-contextualization of knowledge, which is first constructed in a specialized context and then recreated in a different communicative situation for the lay audience" (Camus, J. T. W., 2009). How the media describes the act of unwilling sexual contacts is transmitting the definition of sexual abuse to the public.

### ***"Sexual Abuse"***

Nowadays, the term "sexual abuse" that the English world widely used generally describes all types of undesired sexual behaviors. The same word Chinese is either "sexual abuse invasion" (性侵犯) or "sexual abuse harm" (性侵害), or the abbreviation, "sexual abuse" (性侵). However, neither "sexual abuse," "sexual abuse invasion," or "sexual abuse harm" is a legal term nor a term with a long history in China. To trace the origin of "sexual abuse" in China, I searched the keyword "sexual abuse" on Google, the world's most frequently used search engine, and on Baidu, which shares the second in the world and the first in China (Market Share). The choice of this keyword is because all three terms contain it, which can provide a board result.

In searching on Google, after eliminating irrelevant results, I found that in August 2002, ChinaNews.com (中新网) in Hong Kong forwarded news from Taiwan that "Two primary school students are suspected of sexually abusing harming (性侵害) and killing

the female teacher. The case is finally solved after eight years” (ChinaNews.com, 2002). In November, the same year, Sina.com (新浪网) forwarded news from Information Time (信息时报) that “A male teacher in the United States falsely was accused of sexually abusing invading (性侵犯) 360 children and has been jailed with innocence for five years” (Sina.com, 2002). These two results were discarded because they were written in Chinese but about news outside of China mainland. Then the earliest webpage on Google.com mentioned “sexual abuse” is found in the news sina.com forwarded from Shenyang Today (沈阳今报) on October 13, 2004, under the topic “A hotel manager raped a 16-year-old boy and was only detained for 15 days without a conviction.” The content wrote,

In the early morning of August 21, the 16-year-old boy Mark (pseudonym) from Fushun was raped by his 38-year-old boss at his working hotel during sleep. The sexual abuse invasion (性侵犯) between the same sex is not a crime in China’s current Criminal Law. The public security organs, therefore, punished the boss for 15 days in administrative detention.

In searching on Baidu, the result is found a little earlier. On June 17, 2001, Sohu.com (搜狐) forwarded news from Southern Daily (南方日报) under the topic “Sexual abuse harm (性侵害) case shocked Guangxi. The silly girl was married and miserably devastated by groups of perverts.” It wrote,

A girl who did not know own name, and who got serious dementia, was wandered with a wedding dress and forced to get married like a “baggage” by her parents. She was devastated by a group of old perverts. This sexual abuse harm (性侵害) case in Lingshan County, Guangxi shocked the land.

The two results from Google and Baidu show that entering the 21st century, Chinese media started to adopt “sexual abuse” to describe the undesired sexual behaviors in 2001. However, it is not asserted that 2001 was the first time “sexual abuse” ever appeared. On Google Books Ngram Viewer, an online search engine specifically



visualizes the frequencies of comma-separated phrases between 1500 and 2008 in charts, shows that in the middle to late 20th century, especially from 1990 to 2000, there are some slowly rising resources mentioned both the “sexual abuse harm” (Figure 3) and “sexual abuse invasion” (Figure 2). One thing assured is that in the 21st century, especially in 2007, the frequency of “sexual abuse” was rapidly rising (Figure 1).

A possible reason is that this year, two laws attracted many eyeballs to sexual abuse and sexual harassment. The amended Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Minors was promulgated and effective on June 1, 2007, which is the first time that law in China stated “sexual abuse.” The same year, many provinces, such as Guangdong, Tianjin, and Shanxi, promulgated measures on the implementation of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women and restated sexual harassment. This law was amended in 2005 when prohibition of sexual harassment against women added. Details about legislation towards sexual abuse are discussed in the next section.

### ***“Sexual Abuse Invasion” & “Sexual Abuse Harm”***

Meanwhile, one can quickly notice that the two expanded words of “sexual abuse” in Chinese, either “sexual abuse invasion” or “sexual abuse harm,” are ambiguously interchangeable. In fact, there is no definition of “sexual abuse” in China, even though the national law and regulations are also using it, it is not a legal term for a crime. In 2014, the Office of the Women and Children’s Work Committee of the State Council edited and published a brochure, Guidelines for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Violence Injury, in which it defined “sexual abuse harm” behaviors. Interestingly, academia seems

to have different preferences. A scholar, Di LONG, introduced the definition from the Office in her newly published book, a guide on child “sexual abuse invasion.”

The support camp of each term is giving reasonable explanations. Di Long is one of the well-known pro- “sexual abuse invasion” member, a professor of the Institute of Psychology, who wrote A Comprehensive Professional Guide on Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse, in which she said,

Also, the term “sexual abuse invasion” (性侵犯) is used instead of “sexual maltreatment” (性虐待), “sexual abuse harm” (性侵害) or “sexual harm” (性伤害). The purpose is to avoid using the word “maltreatment” or “harm” to make people mistakenly think that “only sexual behaviors that cause visible physical damage (including damage to the hymen) is considered sexual abuse.” Studies have shown that most children who are sexually abused have no physical damages or even physical signs. The term “sexual abuse invasion” emphasizes: Don’t neglect that the harm caused by sexual abuse is essentially intangible psychological harm by violating children’s rights. So boys who have been sexually abused and girls who are not hymen-damaged can receive legal protection and professional support promptly. (Long, p.5)

In this study, Lucas, a lawyer, also used “sexual abuse invasion” and quoted Long Di to explain his choice.

A pro- “sexual abuse harm” party is Girls’ Protecting (女童保护), a special fund established under the China Children and Children’s Culture and Art Foundation promoting anti-child sexual abuse education for children under 14 years old. In all the lectures and brochures, Girl’s Protecting named child sexual abuse “sexual abuse harm,” because they want to emphasize the harm that sexual abuse cause on children and increase society’s, schools’, and parents’ alerts.

Overall, there are three characteristics of language use in China about sexual abuse. First, the concept is introduced by the media and accepted by the public for less than 19 years. The unfamiliarity of this concept can cause doubt or unacceptance to the public when

professionals attempt to promote related education. Second, the definition of sexual abuse is ambiguous. Neither is it a legal term nor be explained when the criminal law listing types of sexual crime. Lack of explicit information is delaying the popularization process. The incomplete boundary of sexual abuse also dazzles people's awareness of other inappropriate sexual behaviors such as sexual harassment, and further influences the legislation, which is discussed in the next section. Third, the word choice of "sexual abuse invasion" and "sexual abuse harm" is uncertain. Such a gap between the academia and authorities is deepening the confusion within the people.

### **Undeveloped Legislation**

Undeveloped legislation cannot provide solid backup for professionals' work.

### ***Crime of Hooliganism***

Counting the history of China's legislation, the short existence of official law and regulations impact the proper maintenance of child sexual abuse survivors. Only when 39 years ago that China welcomed its first criminal law. In 1979, the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China, sexual abuse against children was not mentioned, and sexual abuse against women was only a part of the crime of hooliganism. It stated,

Where an assembled crowd engages in affrays, creates disturbances, humiliates women or engages in other hooligan activities that undermine public order, if the circumstances are flagrant, the offenders shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not more than seven years, criminal detention or public surveillance.

Ringleaders of hooligan groups shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not less than seven years. (Article 160, Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China, 1979)

The crime of hooliganism defined so broadly that it is hard for the practical work. Even though on September 2, 1983, both the Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Regarding the Severe Punishment of Criminals Who Seriously

Endanger Public Security and the Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Regarding the Procedure for Prompt Adjudication of Cases Involving Criminals Who Seriously Endanger Public Security were released, the crime of hooliganism still existed. The crime of hooliganism is general in the provision and difficult in actual law enforcement. Finally, the arbitrary stipulation of the crime of hooliganism stopped in 1997.

### *The Crime of Sexual Abuse*

21 years ago, rape and molestation were firstly written in the criminal law. In 1997, the amended criminal law divided the past crime of hooliganism into crimes of insults and molestation against women, crimes of molestation against children, crimes of gathering promiscuity, crimes of gathering and fighting, and crimes of provocation. It is the first time it defines sexual abuse behaviors. It wrote,

Whoever, by violence, coercion or other means, rapes a woman is to be sentenced to not less than three years and not more than ten years of fixed-term imprisonment.

Whoever has sexual relations with a girl under the age of 14 is to be deemed to have committed rape and is to be given a heavier punishment.

Whoever rapes a woman or has sexual relations with a girl involving one of the following circumstances is to be sentenced to not less than ten years of fixed-term imprisonment, life imprisonment, or death:

- (1) rape a woman or have sexual relations with a girl and when the circumstances are odious;
- (2) rape several women or have sexual relations with several girls;
- (3) rape a woman in a public place and in the public;
- (4) rape a woman in turn with another or more persons;
- (5) cause the victim serious injury, death, or other serious consequences.

(Article 236, Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China, 1997)

Whoever, by violence, coercion or other means, forces, molests, or humiliates a woman is to be sentenced to not more than five years of fixed-term imprisonment or criminal detention. Whoever assembles a crowd to commit the crimes described in the preceding paragraph, or commits such crimes in public is to be sentenced to not less than five years of fixed-term

imprisonment. Whoever molests a child is to be given a heavier punishment according to the stipulations in the two preceding paragraphs. (Article 237, Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China, 1997)

13 years ago, prohibition of sexual harassment against women was first written into the criminal law. In 2005, the amended Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests stated that,

Sexual harassment against women is banned. The victims shall be entitled to complain to the entity or the relevant organs. (Article 40, Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, 2005)

If anyone commits sexual harassment or family violence against a woman to violate this Law, and if his act constitutes a violation of the public security administration, the victim may require the public security organ to give the violator an administrative punishment or may initiate a civil action in the people's court. (Article 58, Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, 2005)

### ***The Crime of Minors Sexual Abuse***

11 years ago, sexual abuse against minors was firstly banned. Previously mentioned, the amended Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors was promulgated and effective on June 1, 2007, and firstly stated "sexual abuse." It said,

It is prohibited to abduct, traffic in, kidnap or maltreat minors, or to commit sexual assault against minors.

It is prohibited to coerce, entice or make use of minors to go begging, or to organize minors to carry out the activities such as performances which are harmful to their physical and mental health. (Article 41, Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors, 2007)

A public security organ or people's procuratorate shall, when interrogating a minor criminal suspect or inquiring a minor witness or the victim, notify the guardians to be on the spot.

Public security organs, people's procuratorates, and people's courts shall, when handling criminal cases on sexual assaults against minors, protect the reputation of the victims. (Article 56, Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors, 2007)

Overall, it has been less than 40 years when sexual abuse behaviors were first written in the law and later expanded the definitions for women and children. Along with the slow development, many undeveloped barriers are disturbing the promotion of professionals' work.

Therefore, here comes the research question:

*RQ: How professionals working with CSA in China are managing the issue of compassion fatigue?*

It is necessary to understand how professionals working with CSA survivors are experiencing compassion fatigue. First, by understanding professionals, we can better provide professionals with support from organizations and the social system. Second, this study can fill a gap in China mainland's academia. Third, this study can elicit attention on promoting caregiving professionals' mental health.

## **Chapter Two: Methods**

### **Participants**

As explained earlier, no specific organizations are targeting helping CSA survivors, so all professionals who have worked with CSA survivors are eligible for participation despite the number of their experience. Desired participants are from law enforcement (police officers), clinical departments (nurses and physicians), social work (social workers), and psychological therapy providers (counselors). Eventually, nine professionals participated in this study, including four psychological counselors, three social workers, one lawyer, and one prosecutor.

### **Recruitment**

Participants need to be working in China mainland. Participants with experience of CSA cases in Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan are excluded because these areas provide different training for professionals from China mainland. The recruitment combines friends/colleagues' introduction and online searching. The researcher works in an anti-CSA educational organization, Girls' Protecting, and her colleagues introduced some potential participants. The researcher's friend, a social worker also introduced some potential participants. The researcher also searched online about non-profit organizations working on sexual abuse issues. Once a possible organization working for sexual abuse issue is found, an email of recruitment was sent. In the end, fifteen emails to eleven organizations and four persons were sent, receiving four acceptances, four rejections, and seven remained no response. Additionally, a snowball method was used. When contacting potential participants above, the researcher asked them to recommend other professionals if they cannot participate.

## **Qualitative Research Method**

The qualitative research method was conducted through several interviews based on a semi-structured interview guide (Table 1). Because the final thesis will be in English, when planning the interview, the guide was created in English for easier revision purpose. The interview guide was created based on three considerations. First, the research question is regarding professionals working experience, so the first foci is events in work. Second, compassion fatigue is a mental health concept, so the second foci is personal feelings. Third, the researcher is interested in participants' reaction to the events and feelings, so the third domain is self-care.

### **Data Collection**

After recruitment, the participants made appointments to set up interviews. Before the interview, the researcher showed each participant a consent informing the rights. For face-to-face interviews, the consent was displayed in person with signatures collected. For phone interviews, the consent was sent on WeChat or via email. Before interview, one participant required to see the interview guide, so the researcher prepared a self-translated guide in Chinese (Table 2). For participants without special needs for the guide, the interview was described as understanding their working experience and emotional changes.

Data was collected through nine in-depth interviews with nine participants, including two face-to-face interviews in private rooms and eight phone interviews via phone calls and WeChat voice call. All interviews lasted over thirty minutes, including the shortest, thirty-five minutes and the longest, ninety-three minutes. Eight interviews were recorded, but one was lost due to a technological error. One interviewee refused to be



recorded. All interviews, including seven records and two notes, were transcribed, checked for accuracy, and de-identified.

Overall, the interview was based on three domains. First, the researcher asked about participants' working experience, including their working routines, the most triumphant moments, and their biggest challenges. Second, the researcher asked about their feelings, including their feelings in work, using questions such as "How do you feel about working with survivors?" and the influence of feelings on them, using questions such as "Do you think this feeling impacts you?" In the end, the researcher asked about their self-care, using questions such as "How do you react to this feeling?"

### **Data Analysis**

In this qualitative phase, data collection and data analysis coincided. Before analysis, the researcher interpreted all transcripts originated in Chinese to English and marked polysemy from translation in footnotes. The analysis was guided by the grounded theory, specifically the constant comparative method, and consisted of open coding and focused coding. Grounded theory is a frequently used method in qualitative research, which "begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis" (Charmaz, 2014). The constant comparative method aims to distinguish each data point and compare the codes at each level (Charmaz, 2014; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Open coding is the initial step in coding. In this process, the author read each line of the transcript, labeled each sentence, paired the labels, and interpreted each label. Then in the focus coding, the author compared codes from all transcripts, interpreted codes, and categorized frequent codes.

## **Translating**

### ***Literal and Meaningful Translation***

To maintain transparency, the general rule is to literally translate every term, but explain culture-specific terms in the footnote. For example, an interviewee mentioned the importance of “red-headed file/document” (红头文件) in work. While literally translating as a file/document with headings in red color, the researcher added in the footnote, “It is a folk nickname referring to the common name of documents, statements, announcements, public notices, etc. issued by all governmental agencies (mostly the central government) with a red-hot heading and a red seal.” Another example is a well-known metaphor in China, which literally means “flowers of the motherland” (祖国的花朵). When keeping the literal translation, the researcher explained that it referred to children.

When literal translation causes apparent confusion or misunderstandings, then switch to meaningful translation. To maintain accuracy, verbs and adjectives that affect the sentences were transmitted in the form they meant to be. For example, when Joan said, “I felt the bottom of my heart” (我心里有底了), it was translated into “I was certain about the situation.”

### ***Ambiguous Pronunciations***

The ambiguous pronunciations are translated in the closest terms with explanations added. For example, in oral Mandarin Chinese, all third-person pronouns pronounce the same as “ta.” The researcher translated into a possible pronoun and added in the footnote: “In Chinese, the pronunciation of ‘he/him,’ ‘she/her,’ and ‘it’ are all the same ‘ta.’ Later in the interview, the interviewee disclosed that the person was a girl.” Modal particles in pronunciation are translated into similar English words. For example, “嘿呦”

[pronounced “Hey Yoo”] was translated as “yo-heave-ho” with an explanation added, “an onomatopoeia for a cry emitted when doing actions in unison.”

### ***Idioms***

In translating the quoted adages and sayings, the researcher first looks for similar idioms in the English world. If not found, they are meaningfully translated with literal translation added. For example, “Thunder can’t move” (雷打不动) is “be still;” “Hate that the steel can’t be iron” (恨铁不成钢) is “a feeling of exasperation at his failure to make good;” “Prepare for the not-yet-coming rain” (未雨绸缪) is “be prepared for the accident;” and “One-dragon service” (一条龙服务) is “one-package service.”

Additional background information is added for culture-specific idioms. For example, “The three stinky cordwainers are topped by ZHUGE Liang” (三个臭皮匠顶个诸葛亮) is “two heads are better than one.” Footnote is added, “ZHUGE Liang (181-234) was a chancellor of the state of Shu Han during the Three Kingdoms period. He is recognized as the greatest and most accomplished strategist of his era.”

### ***English Words in the Original Transcript***

In rare cases, the participant used English. The English words used in the original interview were kept in translation, but were explained if having different meanings. For example, Joan said, “If you asked me to take this case when I just graduated, if so, I would doubt if I could hold it (hold 住).” The researcher added, “‘Hold’ is the exact English word that the interviewee used. ‘Hold’ is a meme in Chinese word, meaning ‘being able to control the situation.’”

### *No Translation*

Some well-accepted Chinese terms are not translated. For example, “Shidu” is the transcription from “失独,” which literally means bereavement of the only child. As a popular term in academia, “Shidu” is remained in the transcript. The explanation added, “Shidu is a phenomenon denoting the loss of a parent’s only child under the past one-child policy, which is now a wide social issue in China.” Another example is “Hukou” (户口), which means a household registration record. Although having an accurate translation, “Hukou” with its border cultural and social influence remained in the transcript: A local Hukou confirms the benefits one can receive as a local resident. Ecdemic-hukou holders are mostly excluded from local educational resources, city-wide social welfare programs, and many jobs opportunities because of their lack of local hukou status.

## **Chapter Three: Results**

### **Participants Characteristics**

Participants (N=9) are professionals ever working with child sexual abuse survivors, including four social workers, three psychological counselors, one lawyer, and one prosecutor.

Social workers are Joan, Larry, Hana, and Linda. Joan is a female, young age social worker for almost four years, who is a director of social work organization and mainly works for adolescents. Larry is a male, young age social worker for nine years, who is a founder and director of two social work organizations, one mainly for sex education, and the other for child sexual abuse intervention. Hana is a female, young age social worker for one year, who works in a youth social work organization and provides judicial service. Linda is a female, young age social worker for six years, who is the director of sex education project in a social work organization.

Psychological counselors are Holli, Sarah, and Wendy. They all work in the same non-profit organization, providing volunteer service for women and children. Holli is a female, senior age psychological counselor for over ten years, who is a director of this non-profit organization and mainly provides preventive child sexual abuse service. Sarah is a female, senior age psychological counselor for six years, who works primarily in romantic relationships and parent-child relationships. Wendy is a female, senior age psychological counselor for sixteen years, who works mainly in parent-child education.

Legal workers are Lucas, a lawyer, and Yona, a prosecutor. Lucas is a male, middle age public interest lawyer for ten years, who is an executive director of a public interest

law firm mainly working for women and children. Yona is a female, middle age prosecutor for twenty-two years, who works in the Department of Minors for a city Prosecutors Office.

### **Qualitative Results**

The results are presented based on the information retrieved from the interview, which was designed to cover three domains: working environments, personal feelings, and self-care methods. The researcher categorized each transcript in three domains, compared the response to each question and found four main results. Each result answers each domain. The first domain “work” found that professionals are facing challenging working environments. The second domain “feeling” revealed that professionals have intense psychological distress. In analyzing the “feeling” domain, one result emerged: professionals are not aware of their mental status. Last, the third domain “self-care” found professionals are not engaged in self-care.

#### **Professionals Are Facing Challenging Working Environments**

In talking about working experience, participants introduced their daily routines and challenges in work. When concentrating on characteristics of working environments, four results are found: Most professionals overwork; Professionals cannot balance work and personal life; Professional’s working environment is not satisfying; The working environment varies for professionals.

##### ***Most Professionals Overwork***

Most professionals have flexible working hours. For example, for Hana, a social worker, one of her clients contacted her whenever they wanted, even at late night (11 pm) and in the early morning (6 am). Flexible working hours is partly because of unpredictable emergencies.

We provide the service of case consultation. The service of case consultation is often at 10 o'clock, at 10 pm or 11 pm. And when they come to consult, although it was off-duty, the sexual abuse cases are very urgent cases, and they had to be dealt with immediately. So it doesn't mean that others wouldn't look for (me). [laugh] They will definitely look for (me), and they will come during after-work hours. (Linda, social worker)

Not only is professionals' working time long and dynamic, but their workload is also massive.

In 2014, including 2015, gradually I am more and more tired, more and more tired, like snowballing. This work can't be done every day. For example, the things that I scheduled today (are done), then it suddenly would come up with countless new jobs. Every day you work overtime and overtime, and you see there are still countless things. There are still many things that haven't been done. It is already in such a situation. So there is no solution. (Yona, prosecutor)

Sometimes, the workload is beyond professionals' original working routines.

Because what differs from other public prosecutors handling adult cases is that, they are over after the case ends, but my case won't end with me! For example, after my case ends, the criminal children are saved by me. When they are released from prison, they would still contact me. They would also visit me or I would invite them to eat, or other things. In fact, this has far exceeded the relationship between a prosecutor and a defendant. (Yona, prosecutor)

The massive workload is partly because of the limited resource, which potentially enhances professional' dedication. Sarah, a public interest counselor, accepts all the cases even though each psychological counselor should have a specialty. She also responds to all phone calls even though they may be from an unfamiliar field.

Of course, you can also choose not to take this project; this is something you can choose, but usually, there may not be so many people (professionals). Then (you may say), "OK, then I'll take it." This is the situation. (Sarah, psychological counselor)

### ***Professionals Cannot Balance Work and Personal Life***

Joan, a social worker, admitted that working in not working hours affects her life. In fact, there is a case in progress, and the other is a rebel youth who ran away from home. That's because, it really means that you, you also have to assist his mother to help her find him. During that period, you were contacting with the case outside your working hours, so it will definitely affect your life and your family, right? So, it really will affect in some way, depending on how you think about it. (Joan, social worker)

Some professionals blur the boundary between work and life. Hana, a social worker, admitted that she does not divide her working and personal contact, and her clients (victims) can easily contact her as her friends and families do. She said, "Technically speaking, we don't have a working number and personal number. They are all the same, and we also have the same Wechat account."

### ***Professional's Working Environment Is Not Satisfying***

Linda, a social worker, directly said, "In fact, our working environment is not so good." Most professionals described their most significant challenges in work from the environment.

#### ***Social Ideology***

Many professionals mentioned that the traditional ideology in the society impacts sexual abuse victim's recovery and the promotion of their work. A common ideology in Chinese culture is parent power. Linda described the most helpless moment in her work was that her first client, a 12-year-old- girl who was intended sexually abused, was sent back to hometown village with old grandparents by parents. Her parents kept stopping the social worker meeting their daughter and later called off the social worker intervention service.

Generally speaking, after suffering from sexual abuse, they would hope to reduce big trouble into a small one, and the small one into nothing. In the



end, it is best to move the home, move schools, and change the whole environment. So... I think this is the most difficult part of doing this job. (Larry, social worker)

Another ideology is chastity, along with shame on sexual abuse victims. Larry showed an example when parents holding such ideology view their victim children, then with the parent power, they may disturb the sexually abused children from receiving intervention service. Lucas, a public interest lawyer, found that some male, particularly male decision-makers are holding such ideology. Larry has been promoting equal participation to women/children protection. He believes that to change the environment, it is critical to impact powerful stakeholders, unfortunately, most of whom are men with an ideology of male superiority and the degradation of the female.

The tradition considering females as the appendage of males, the tradition of male superiority, and the use of females as tools for the so-called venting of males, or as a tool for the use of successive generations, such a traditional gender role stereotype causes it. Everybody thinks it is not a big deal. This is also a very pathetic thing. [...] Although it is true that this work is difficult, the external environment is that two parties are on a parallel line and rarely meet each other at a crossing point. (Lucas, lawyer)

### *System Support*

The undeveloped legal system cannot support their work. The different obligations between public security organs and Women's Federation make many sexual abuse cases not be transferred to the Women's Federation, a national institution providing intervention service for victim women and children. Therefore, many victims fail to receive service in time. Linda has communicated with local public security organs for a year but still cannot build the cooperation. Failing to adopt in-time intervention for sexual abuse victims caused Linda's client, a woman being raped, suffered from accidental pregnancy, abortion, and trauma.

For example, until now, in the process of this work, one thing very deplorable is that we have not yet connected with the public security organs. We did a mechanism, that is, if a sexual abuse party finds the department and finds some industries, they can... they know our project so that they can transfer these sexual abuse parties to us, and we can provide a one-package service. We will follow up all the way. However, we didn't build such relationships with the public security department, so when the case was reported to the police, it was not transferred to us in time. (Linda, social worker)

Lucas as a lawyer, listed seven problems remain in law settings: the victim's spiritual damages claims are difficult to receive supports; the protection of boys being raped remains a blank in legislation; the crime of seducing child prostitution violates children's rights and interest; the national criminal compensation fund system is absent; the Law on the Protection of Minors in China is complicated in operation; the school's responsibility is unclear in event-oriented child sexual abuse cases; the prevention and control of sexual harassment and sexual abuse on the campus are not achieved.

### ***The Working Environment Varies for Professionals***

Depending on their genders, professionals, and affiliation types, some professionals mentioned more barriers at work.

#### *Male professionals*

The working environment for male professionals is unusual because they are facing both the necessity of participation and insurmountable difficulties at work. There are disadvantages for male professionals working with female victims. It is widely regarded as inappropriate for male professionals working with female child sexual abuse victims. Larry admitted that this is one of the reasons he quit the front-line work and performs management. Compared to males, female professionals have many advantages in this work. Lucas, a lawyer, believes it is beneficial for communication. Larry, a social worker,

agrees that sexual abuse victim girls can be less alert. Yona, a prosecutor, also thinks it helps to implement once inquiry.

In particular, I believe that child sexual abuse cases must be done by women, particularly child sexual abuse cases against girls. It needs a female prosecutor, a female judge, or female police. Perhaps regarding children protection, I think, so far, we need to make it once inquiry, finish the inquiry in once. (Yona, prosecutor)

However, even with the disadvantages of working with sexual abuse victims, there is a necessity for male participation in the sexual abuse issue. The quantity and quality of male participation remain the same to 10 years ago, while this social issue requires the involvement of people. Lucas, a lawyer, is regarded as a typical example of male participation in the sexual abuse issue. He said,

I think, first of all, women's issues ... not women, let's say sexual abuse, but the majority of victims of sexual abuse are women, but you see it is definitely not a women's issue, it should be a social issue. Then this social issue requires the participation of people in society, especially the participation of men. (Lucas, lawyer)

Concerning to female's advantages in communication and male's physical strength, Lucas suggested to achieve cross-gender cooperation.

Therefore, I think that in the case of girls' sexual abuse, in principle, it should be matched. At least one female lawyer should be involved to represent the case so that when communicating with the victim and the families of the victim, relatively speaking, it is better. (Lucas, lawyer)

#### *Non-profit Organization Managers*

In working with child sexual abuse, a sensitive topic, it is crucial to cooperate with other skillful professionals. When organization managers contact other organizations for outreach or cooperation reasons, they met governmental restrictions. Linda, a social worker and the regional director of the F project, has been hitting barriers when promoting

cooperations between her organization and public security and the Federal Women's Union:

The Public Security Bureau reflected that, the above department reflected that, "If you can let the superior send a red-headed file<sup>1</sup> to me, saying that I must do this process, then we can do it. But if my superior does not send this red-header file, I can't add this transfer process." It is such a situation that we have no way to build relationships with the public security department until now. One may be the reason for its working nature, the other is about the process, the assigning from the superior to the down, with strong administration. So if we want to push from the bottom to the top now, it is very difficult. (Linda, social worker)

Most CSA professionals are working in non-profit organizations. Lacking stable fundings from the country, they found money is a big problem. Larry, a social worker and the founder of Q social work organizations in two cities think the biggest challenge is lack of funding. This problem is so influential that Larry admitted sometimes they have to give up their work.

The biggest and biggest challenge is actually the problem of being an organization and a source of funds for a team. I think it is the biggest challenge because if there is no money, there is no way to continue doing this [...] If one of your work ends, and there is no money, then it can only be suspended. Or if you want to go to other funders, see if they are willing to (support). So some may think that you have no innovation, no highlights, or nothing else, they may be... or some people think that "you are too sensitive, we do not want to cut into such sensitive issues." (Larry, social worker)

Lucas, a public interest lawyer and executive director of C public interest law firm, agreed that his biggest challenge is also funding. He explained that the difficulties in funding are from the macroenvironment. Even though some foreign foundations are

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<sup>1</sup> The "red-headed file/document" is not a legal term. It is a folk nickname referring to the common name of documents, statements, announcements, public notices, etc. issued by all governmental agencies (mostly the central government) with a red-hot heading and a red seal.

welcoming NGOs, accepting their money is risky—according to Anna, the founder of the A center, one of the reasons for A center’s abolition, was that they accepted many overseas funds. After A center’s abolition, Anna established the C law firm.

It is very difficult for such personnel of this institution to attract talents to join in and retain talents for a long time, and you (the institution) are unattractive. Then your institution’s funding is difficult, right? For most of NGOs in mainland China, grassroots NGOs, it is very difficult for them to raise funds in China. They are more dependent on related foreign foundations. Then as the investment is getting more and more difficult, it will be... In fact, investment is also related to talents. In fact, they are closely related. And these two factors have no doubt that be restricted to the impact of the entire macro-environment. I think this is the largest challenge, a large factor of the challenge. (Lucas, lawyer)

### *Social Workers*

The social worker is one of the most common professionals working with CSA survivors in China mainland. With the high demand for workload and complexity of CSA cases, social workers are under enormous pressure.

Actually, the pressure was indeed quite high. I think the pressure was really quite high. Just to say, because when working with this case, I had been a social worker for more than three years, and almost the fourth year, and I have accumulated some experience. If you asked me to take this case when I just graduated, if so, I would doubt if I could hold it. (Joan, social worker)

Joan’s words seem to apply to Hana, a freshman social worker, who showed symptoms of feeling tired, preference for staying at home, difficulty of finding interest, etc. Hana also found difficult explaining the functions of social workers to sexual abuse victims’ family members.

For example, we say that we can do emotion assistance, or do some sex education work, and then or... we say, for example, you... Because we generally call parents of the underage, and we tell them, “if your emotions are not good...” Because sexual abuse is likely to affect the family—and then tell them that we can also talk to them, deal with them, or ease their emotions, pressure, or doing sex education... Sex education they think is okay, but mainly for easing emotions, chatting, releasing stress, they feel

that they are all right, they don't really need them. Most parents are like this, that is, parents who refused and having such an idea are like this. (Hana, social worker)

### *Psychological Counselors*

If it can comfort Hana—when facing such doubts from parents, she can think about her fellow professionals, psychological counselors, who mainly focus on emotional assistance. There is no doubt that such a rejection from CSA survivors and families is adding barriers to their work. Larry, a social worker, also compared the impression of social workers and counselors on people:

However, I feel that this sensitivity will be much lower than that of the psychological counselor. Everyone feels bad about psychological counseling: “Are you ill?” When mentioning social workers, they feel that “Oh, it seems OK.” Of course, the most important thing is that they don't know what social workers are doing. They are not clear. (Larry, social worker)

Even though people may prefer social workers to counselors from an understanding perspective or Joan, the senior social worker, suggested her colleagues refer the overwhelming case to counselors.

If that girl, this thing needs assessment later, about how much it will affect her later. If there are some symptoms that are quite serious and beyond your ability... Because there is an O organization specializing in youth services here. Their resources will be more abundant, and there will be some support from some psychologists/counselors. I said, “You can consider transferring this case.” (Joan, social worker)

Even though it is unable to compare two different professions, from Joan's perspective, counselors should be able to handle situations that confound social workers. Sarah, a counselor, said one of her clients was referred by a prosecutor, who found her not looking good in the court. However, Sarah said, if CSA survivors do not seek advice, there is no opportunity for them to communicate with a psychological counselor. Therefore,

counselors are mostly meeting CSA survivors who are referred by other professionals. For counselors, the denial from the clients, the complexity of cases, the expectation from outside fellows, and lacking outreach resource produce pressure.

### *Legal Workers*

Lucas, a public interest lawyer, regarded secondary harm from the legal workers as unavoidable.

Therefore, as long as this case is exposed, as long as you enter the prosecution process, as long as the case handling agency records the confession from the victim, it is secondary harm. (Larry, lawyer)

### **Professionals Have Intense Psychological Distress**

Professionals' emotions are affected by both outside environments—working with child sexual abuse survivors, and inside environments—inner self-demands. Some findings in the “working” domain overlapped with “feeling,” so they are merged. Three results are: Professionals have shown symptoms of burnout and secondary trauma; Professionals highly demand themselves in work; Professionals cannot find a moment to feel a sense of accomplishment.

### *Professionals Have Shown Symptoms of Burnout and Secondary Trauma*

#### *Recalling*

Similar to “flashing” in trauma, some professionals recall the experience working with child sexual abuse victims even though the event passed a long time ago. Linda, a social worker, still feels bad for her first sexual abuse client, a child sexual abuse victim who was sent back to her undeveloped hometown village, living with her grandparents, and whose parents called off the service. Linda said, “I feel regretful. Until now I still feel regretful. This regret has not decreased.” Joan, a social worker, took over her first and her

only child sexual abuse victim two years ago. After two years, after her pregnancy and reassignment, she still thinks of the child and even asks her previous colleagues about the child.

Because you also know the impact of this case on me, because up to now, sometimes I will also call, I will follow up with my colleagues and ask about her situation. You can imagine it; there is still a bit of worry and care in my heart. [...] When I heard, heard that the client is now in a quite good state, in fact, I will still be quite, quite happy, quite relieved, should be, relieved. (Joan, social worker)

Similar to secondary trauma, some professionals connect their memory with the child sexual abuse victim's sufferings. Linda, a social worker, when working with her first sexual abuse client, a woman being raped, she was reminded of a scene of her mother.

I didn't think it was such a difficult thing at the time. As a result, after I and my first sexual abuse case party, the client, after the first meeting, I calmed myself down in the car for two hours. [...] so I was, my own empathy at that time was quite...it was quite...my empathy was quite, how to say, it is easily for me to empathize. [...] It's because my mother used to experience domestic violence. There was a picture of her that she was looking at her purple eyes in the morning, hesitating to go out. At that time, I was still very young, but I remembered this picture, so I was... my mother... I believe that my mother also had such a feeling of shame. Similar to this, her emotions also infected me [...] (Linda, social worker)

### *Burnout*

The recall experience only makes Linda uncalm, but what is worse is that, along with recalling the past, seeing the unfair cases, feeling disappointed with the society, having the sense of powerlessness, etc., Linda experienced burnout after two months. She said, "After these emotions, these pressures accumulated, at a critical point, there was a burnout. The burnout was that I easily remembered my past sad experience, and then I kept crying and crying constantly, then I cried for three days."



If Linda had prepared for such psychological distress before the two hours of self-calming, she could have better dealt with later pressures. If she had received support in the later two-month pressure accumulation, she could have avoided burnout. If she had gained early intervention when showing symptoms of burnout, she would not have cried for that long. Lucas, a lawyer, is the only one who directly mentioned and asked for the prevention of job burnout.

We have also explored this issue. Being a public-service lawyer for a long time, including long-term exposure to the public interest, [51:30] dealing with these vulnerable, these poor and weak, these venerable underprivileged groups, many people have discussed whether it will cause the problem of job burnout. (Lucas, lawyer)

### *Empathy*

Empathy exists among professionals, especially those who are parents. They easily put on the CSA survivor's shoes and think on behalf of them. The extensive use of empathy is a factor of compassion fatigue.

If it is my own child, will I be like this parent? It may be a big challenge for me. Because if it is really my child, then for what I was told, am I willing to accept it? Then do I need to try? What do I think about this little one in my own family? What is my future? I think I may be more likely to think of this thing. (Larry, social worker)

### ***Professionals Highly Demand Themselves in Work***

For some professionals, high self-requirement leads to the massive workload, while endless workload increases self-requirement, which builds a vicious circle.

Professionals demand themselves to be prepared to help others. They stress that they need to be stable and healthy: "my personality should be relatively stable, relatively healthy, and then I can work for others" (Sarah, psychological counselor). Such an impression could be a stereotype on their positions. For example, social workers must be

healthy: “If you have pressure, and you are a social worker, so before you help the client, at least you yourself must be healthy.” (Joan, social worker). Legal workers must be rational: “Because as a legal person, we must first be rational. If you are too sentimental, if you are always crying, or you feel like... if you can’t give others a kind of... How can you protect the child in this case? This is a problem.” (Yona, prosecutor). Indeed, the responsibilities of their career require them to have certain qualities in certain occasions, but there should be a space to release themselves. Their attempts to hide weakness may imply that they are facing “untalkable” pressure.

Professionals demand themselves to work hard. Professionals working for child sexual abuse victims/survivors are loving and dedicated. Lucas, a public interest lawyer, praised his colleagues that, “we do not have such a strong desire for the pursuit of reputation, especially the profit. To work for the public interest, there must be feelings, passions, a certain spirit of sacrifice and dedication.” With such merits, Yona, a prosecutor makes herself extremely busy:

I also highly require myself. And there may be many external tasks, such as writing research materials, writing advertising documents, taking judicial classes, and giving lectures to judicial social workers... All sorts of things. In this way, I can exercise myself, but on the other hand, I bring myself more invisible pressure. (Yona, prosecutor)

However, hard work brings a massive workload, which overwhelms Yona and makes her want to quit.

In addition to the “untalkable” and overwhelming pressure, professionals’ high self-demand is generating potential psychological distress. Gradually, their attempts to be strong may numb them.

This work must still be done, so I can only say that to make myself stronger. So actually... now I think maybe when I see a lot of cases at the beginning,

I think: “Oh, this is incredible.” But now I may be a little desensitized after see so much. After a little desensitization, I feel like what else vicious cases I haven’t seen, right? (Larry, social worker)

### ***Professionals Cannot Find a Moment to Feel A Sense Of Accomplishment***

Indeed, many professionals are still happy with the “small achievements” they make. Linda’s sense of accomplishments come from two sides. On the one hand, she protects sexual abuse victims’ rights and interests. She successfully helped her first client, a 12-year-old girl who was almost sexually abused, strive for a great amount of compensation and her second client, a married woman who was raped, strive for a large amount of mental damage compensation. On the other hand, she is happy seeing sexual abuse victims’ improvements. She was happy to see her client, a woman who had been raped, gradually recover from the trauma, change from negative worldviews, and be able to bravely accuse the perpetrator in person. Larry, a social worker, thinks receiving clients’ recognition, getting their approval, and seeing their improvement are fulfilling. Sarah, a psychological counselor, thinks being able to help others to help themselves brings her sense of accomplishment.

However, for Hana, she could not think of a sense of accomplishment. She believes the success and failure are mixed.

[sigh] The sense of accomplishment... There is not too much sense of accomplishment. Because there are always some quite difficult cases, that is, other... These, some good feedback, may alleviate, slightly relieve the specific frustration and feeling of particularly powerlessness in facing these, in dealing with these difficult cases. But there is no particular sense of accomplishment because I feel that after dealing with this problem, there will still be other problems next. (Hana, social worker)

### **Professionals Are Not Aware of Their Mental Status**

During the interview, it was difficult to obtain enough data about “feeling.” The limited information implies an absence of self-awareness in personal “feelings.” Four results are: Professionals described their mental status with obscure words; Most professionals avoided talking about feelings; Some professionals did not understand the question about feelings; New-coming professionals are not prepared for these negative emotions.

#### ***Professionals Described Their Mental Status with Obscure Words***

When asking about their “feelings,” “emotions,” or “mood” facing the sexual abuse victims or their general working experience, some professionals provided direct answers using a single or very concise word. Meanwhile, these words are less professional but more widely used, including positive keywords such as relieved, happy, and positive, and negative keywords such as surprised, worried, doubtful, heavy, and job burnout (Table 3). Some keywords are from indirect agree or disagree with the interviewer. For Sarah, a psychological counselor, when being asked “So you are quite confident?” she said, “To what extent we can help, in fact, I am also not sure...you just mentioned the word ‘confident.’ But I think one thing is certain, that is...” When being asked, “Aren’t you panic?” Sarah said, “No, that’s normal because her response was actually quite normal.” The keywords “uncertain” and “not panic” are added (Table 3).

#### ***Most Professionals Avoided Talking About Feelings***

For example, when interviewing Hana, a social worker, the interviewer asked her three times about feelings by adjusting languages from “psychological aspect” to “feel” and “mood,” but Hana kept avoiding each question.

The first example is when asking her feelings about the process of working with the first child sexual abuse client/victim, Hana responded by describing the case and exchanged the “feel” (emotion) to “think” (opinion). Even though it is a specific “yes” or “no” question, Hana avoided.

Interviewer: Then do you feel that from your psychological aspect, do you feel any change? From the first acceptance to the end?

Hana: [...] I think... such a case is too rare.

The second example is when asking her feelings about a child sexual abuse victim encountered delay influence on the later intimate relationship, Hana answered her reflection of the case result.

Interviewer: Then when you later discovered through this assessment that she really had some problems, how do you feel?

Hana: I feel that... there is a long way to go. [chuckle] Although it is over, the problems that she has not shown yet are... Some things, there is something may not be prepared for the accident, and we can't solve for her, and tell her first that she has this problem. Maybe she has to wait until that happens, when she comes to us, then we can help her.

The third example is when asking her feelings about parents calling off her second CSA client/victim, Hana described other similar cases.

Interviewer: When this parent chose to end the service, what was your mood?

Hana: Some did not start at all.

Then the interviewer asked the third time about Hana's general feelings about working with CSA survivors.

Interviewer: In general, how do you feel about helping these sexually abused children?

Hana: How do (I) feel about helping them? [silence] Because these sexually abused children I have contacted, like the first one, the one I told you, I don't think that sexual abuse has a particularly special impact on her. [...]

Then Hana described this case and explained how she reacted in work. The interviewer had to ask again, unfortunately, Hana did not understand the question:

Interviewer: How does your mood feel about your whole work?

Hana: [silence] Huh? I don't quite understand this question.

Finally, the interviewer provided examples and explained the question, and Hana answered some keywords about emotions.

Interviewer: For example, do you generally think that your work is stressful for you, making you feel painful? Or, for example, does it make you feel challenged, but happy? There are all kinds of such adjectives. How do you describe the experience and mood of your work?

Hana: I think it is challenging, sometimes accompanied by some pressure... Sometimes I am very happy to see their changes; I feel that what I am doing makes sense. But not everything can be solved, so sometimes (I) will have higher requirements for myself.

However, in the content, Hana only mentioned one keyword representing her emotion, "happy." She seemed less care about her personal feelings but described her work. Transitional conjunction showed she was unsatisfied with the fact that she cannot solve everything, and she seemed to blame it on her lack of training, so asked for higher self-requirement.

### ***Some Professionals Did Not Understand the Question About Feelings***

Some professionals did not understand the purpose of the question either the expectation from the interviewer on their response. Hana, a social worker, directly said, "I don't understand this question." Lucas, a lawyer, said, "What do you mean by psychological feeling?" Some professionals misunderstood the question asking "feelings," so instead of describing personal emotions, they talked about "ideas" or "thoughts." Sarah, a psychological counselor, said, "as for my feelings, you mean ideas. I would think..."

### ***New-Coming Professionals Are Not Prepared for These Negative Emotions***

New professionals may lack school training about possible mental issues in practical work. Hana, a social worker, met her first sexual abuse victim in college, during the probationary period, in “panic” and “muddle.” Hana said, “We learned some things during class, that is, some professional things, but there are still some differences between theory and practice.” Professionals transferred from other field are not uncertainly prepared for working in the sexual abuse field. Linda, a social worker, has worked on community projects and familiarized with cases management for three years before transferred to the sexual abuse field. When starting this new field, Linda has done rich preparation.

Later, because of working with the sexual abuse issue, I need to do some basic work, to understand the knowledge of sex. So I received training, received some training in sex education. And I also learned by myself, took some independent studies, and learned some sexual knowledge. For example, like the [phonetic] Mr. Pan Xueming’s book, then I also read several [phonetic] Mr. Pan Xueming’s book. I also went to Hong Kong, to some professional organizations working for sexual abuse issues such as RainLily, to visit and study. (Linda, a social worker)

However, when working with her first sexual abuse client, she felt such intense emotions that she calmed herself for two hours alone in the car, and she even experienced burnout two months later. This may partially because she was not aware of inspecting mental status.

### **Professionals Are Not Engaged in Self-Care**

After the intense feelings mentioned previously, participants answered questions to explain how they react, select methods, and take care of themselves. Three results are: Most professionals are not trained to prepare compassion fatigue; The efficacy of the supervision of professionals remains dubious; Professionals adopted avoidance as a self-care method.

### ***Most Professionals Are Not Trained to Prepare Compassion Fatigue***

Without training of compassion fatigue, or secondary trauma, or job burnout, most professionals seek solutions to the unpleasant feelings on their own. Rest is a conventional way of self-care, but with the inflexible working hours, having a long-time rest becomes precious. Even during rest, Hana, a social worker feels tired. Not relieving the psychological distress makes self-care even harder.

But I usually play games or watch movies during the weekend, and I watch till very late. I got up very late in the morning, and eat very late. I spend weekends decadently. [...] I feel that after the break, there is no difference from without a break. Because even if I rest, but there is nothing to do, there is no serious work. [...] [I] just take a break and see what I can do. I won't say: "Oh, I want to go shopping. Let's go shopping." Because I feel tired when I think of shopping. So I usually play with the phone, and then watch the show. Occasionally I go out to have a meal, but then I have to take a taxi to go and take a taxi back. Because I feel too tired. (Hana, social worker)

### ***Some Professionals Lack of Supervisors***

All social workers and psychological counselors have supervisors to talk about difficulties in work, but not for the lawyer and prosecutor. Lucas is both a public interest lawyer and the executive director of a public interest law firm. He agrees that providing regular or irregular psychological counseling service with teammates is necessary, but a practical barrier makes it impossible.

Of course, there is a need. I just said that we don't have the condition and resource to do it now. For example, which psychological professional should I find to regularly and irregularly intervene for me? Do you need to pay? What is the price? Who should pay the [phonetic] money? What is the frequency? Is it convenient for them? (Lucas, lawyer)

Because of lacking supervision or professional counseling service, Yona, a prosecutor decided to be a psychological counselor herself. Although Yona does learn a lot from studying for the psychological counselor exam, the excessive self-care process may



also burden her workload. When facing problems that she cannot solve as a counselor, she may feel greater distress.

No, no. We don't have supervisors here. Unlike those psychological counselors who have supervisors above them and help release them. We don't. We rely on ourselves completely. Because of these reasons, I used to spend over two months to take the psychological counselor exam. Of course, in the process, it is good that I learned. After learning, I feel that I really can resolve many things on my own. But now for this reality, this situation, I can't ... I think I cannot solve it. (Yona, prosecutor)

When asking caring and supports outside of work, most professionals mentioned friends or colleagues and families, and others admitted the help from friends or colleagues and families. Lucas is in charge of a network of public interest lawyers, so he also gains supports from communicating with the online community.

### ***The Efficacy of the Supervision of Professionals Remains Dubious***

All social workers and psychological counselors have equipped supervisors in the organization. Linda's sex education project provided three supervisors for five social workers. Hana's social work organization invites supervisors from outside regularly. Larry has different supervisors in his social work organizations, but personally, his supervisor remains the same. Both a psychological counselor and a social worker have learned from supervision.

In fact, I think as a professional counselor, supervision is particularly important, and it provides professional support. [...] I also sometimes get stuck, and I will find a teacher to supervise. I will also do the group supervision like I said, in which the case will be reported during the group supervision. I will report my own case, and everyone will discuss such a case. I think this is very important support. (Sarah, psychological counselor)

I actually used to... I was very confused. I don't know what to do. I don't know how to choose the right one. Later, the supervisor said, we could not help them solve all the problems, because we are not omnipotent. Therefore, when we are solving some emergencies or some difficult and complicated problems, we should mainly consider values and ethics. Because we have

basic values, is to, for example, ensure their lives are safe, this is the most basic. Others are—Maybe before because I have been with this child for a while, knowing what he needs most, then maybe we will take the one that he needs the most and the most urgent as the starting, as the starting point. (We) try to do what we can. If some children really have to commit another crime during the pending bail period, we can't do anything. (Hana, social worker)

Although supervision service provides caring and supports for the social workers and psychological counselors with severe cases, it is unsure whether it indeed works. Some social workers and psychological counselors described their supervisors as friends—Are the comforts they gained from supervision or friendship? Are they effective professional supports? For example,

In fact, our supervisors have always changed and changed. But [51:00] for my very early supervisor, I think they might have started working with me since I became a social worker and stepped in the field. So I will talk to them about various situations, problems, or things. A teacher and a friend. (Larry, social worker)

### ***Professionals Adopted Avoidance as A Self-Care Method***

Most professionals described their solutions to difficulties in work as “changing the mindset.” Joan, a social worker, had to stop herself from thinking further. She said, “In my heart, I actually feel that way. Slowly, I will tell myself: It's ok now, don't go on thinking.” Linda, a social worker, adopts the same method, “Don't think about work when you are resting. You have to remind yourself. Don't think about it. [laugh]” Does it really work? Larry, a social worker, admitted that watching news about sexual abuse victims made him very depressed, and how he faced such a situation was to “Change the channel! (laugh)” Although he talked in a joking tone, it is worrying whether he can really detach from depression.

## **Chapter Four: Discussions**

### **Risks of Compassion Fatigue**

#### **Compassion Fatigue**

Some professionals already experienced syndromes related to compassion fatigue. For example, Larry, a social worker, described his experience of “desensitization.” Although he used to feel strong psychological distress when reading child sexual abuse news, now he felt “desensitize.” According to Bellolio and his colleagues (2014), “Compassion fatigue is the emotional and physical burden felt by those helping others in distress, leading to reduced capacity and interest in being empathetic towards future suffering.” In this example, Larry is losing his interest in empathy.

Figley (1995) mentioned five reasons that make trauma workers exposed to compassion fatigue. Surprisingly, all five reasons are found in the participants of this study. First, professionals are exposed to the extreme intensity of trauma-inducing facts. In this study, social workers, Larry, Hana, and Linda either works in the sexual abuse project in the social work organization or works with youth that involved in crime, so they are all exposed to child sexual abuse victims in a regular basis. An exception is Joan, who is a judicial social worker and only worked with child sexual abuse victim once, but because of lacking training, that once experience was also intense for her.

Second, professionals are all caring and dedicated people with strong empathy. For example, both Larry, a social worker, and Lucas, a lawyer mentioned their children. Being a father, when working with sexually abused children, they hold strong empathy and keep reminding their child.

Third, some professionals have experienced similar traumatic events in their lives. Based on the board definition of sexual abuse, combining both the physical, sexual assault and not necessarily physical sexual harassment, some professionals do experience similar events. Holli, a psychological counselor, admitted that she encountered exhibitionism and suffered sexual harassment when she was a teenager. Larry, a social worker, recalled his memory in schools that classmates being sexually assaulted. Figley warned a danger of over-generalizing personal experience and over-promoting the methods of coping to the victim. For example, based on the author's limited notes, Wendy, a psychological counselor stated that so many people had experienced sexual abuse, and she thought sexual abuse was not a big deal. She was right because holding such an attitude can speed up the victim detaching from the traumatic event. However, it may also underestimate the trauma they face.

Fourth, professionals with unresolved trauma are activated by clients with similar trauma. For example, Linda, a social worker, recalled her mother's domestic violence experience when looking at her client's sexual abuse experience. Individually, Linda did not suffer from her mother's trauma, but she did experience trauma when seeing her mother's "purple eyes." After years, when meeting her client, a woman who was shameful of being raped, Linda recalled her mother and felt "powerless." Feeling "powerless" in work does not mean she did not do her work well, but in fact, the use of the word implies she did not manage her emotions well.

Fifth, children traumata are provocative for caregivers. The theme can be applied to all the professionals who worked or are still working with child sexual abuse survivors.

Overall, professionals are exposed to the factors that causing compassion fatigue, which increases their risks of getting compassion fatigue.

### **Professional Care**

Taking the social worker as an example, starting from 1987, social work as a major is open to colleges. However, only when in 2004 that social worker was recognized as a profession by previous Ministry of Labor and Social Security (current the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security). In the absence of social awareness, environment development, and platform resources, it is estimated that from 1988 to 2003, over 80,000 graduates of social work majors were wasted (Li, Han, & Huang, 2011). In 2004, when recognizing social workers, the Ministry of Civil Affairs also defined the professional ability characteristics of social workers, including “the ability to observe, understand, judge, communicate and self-control.” Skills requirements for social workers at the third level included “the ability to use empathy and tactics to communicate with the client” (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2010). Social workers are required to equip compassion.

Since 2004, China has paid attention to social work development. In 2008, there started the first Social Worker Professional Level Test and evaluated different professional degrees of social workers. In 2011, China’s first medium- and long-term plan for the construction of social work professionals came out, named the Medium and Long-term Planning for the Construction of Social Work Professionals (2011-2020), which appealed to widely train social work professionals, including for the adolescent service, women and children service, and social aid.

In 2018, the National Social Workers Professional Level Examination Guidance for the primary degree was revised. The new textbook targets in providing professional

social work knowledge, methods, and popularization. The syllabus shows that it tests the general process of social work practice, including case, estimate, plan, intervention, evaluation; and various social work areas, including serving for children, youth, aged, women, the disabled, correction, special care and placement, social aid, family, school, community, hospital, and corporation. However, nothing about self-care or other psychological support for the professionals.

Indeed, social workers have supervisors to ask for help. The China Association of Social Workers Occupational Skill Certificate Center sets standards for the licensed supervisors. The assessments are mainly measured in three aspects,

The core concepts and attitudes of supervision: To pay attention to the supervisor's job ethics, professional qualities, and essential communication and coordination skills.

Social work practice ability: To focus on social work supervisor's comprehensive application of theoretical knowledge, abilities to explore and analyze problems, abilities to plan, act, and implement, and abilities to monitor and evaluate the service.

Supervision ability: To emphasize the comprehensive assessment of social work supervisor's abilities in communication, collaboration, resource negotiation, personnel management, and guiding social workers' growth. (2015)

In addition to the ambiguous "guiding social workers' growth," it seems difficult to find clues that supervisors can provide psychological support to the social worker. In 2014, the Ministry of Civil Affairs released a Guide to Social Work Service for Children (2014), in which it listed functions of supervisors, including "supervise social workers' professional ethics and provide emotional support." If regarding emotional support a part of care, it counts. However, the supervision objects are "new social workers for children entering social service institutions; social workers for children with short service years and insufficient experience; students who are taking internships in social service agencies for

children; volunteers of social service agencies for children.” So social workers who have worked for a period are excluded from supervision, even though they are still in risks of compassion fatigue.

Fortunately, the government did not forget to care about these talents. One of the four goals in the Medium and Long-term Planning for the Construction of Social Work Professionals (2011-2020) issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (2012) was to improve the environment for the development of social work professionals. However, the policy was mainly a material incentive and a spiritual incentive to retain talents, while did not take into account the mental health status of social workers. Surely the author cannot wholly criticize that “Supervisors are not helpful. Governments do not care about professionals.” One thing possible is that policy-makers, textbook-editors, training-providers are not aware of the potential mental health issues of social workers--or they would have added related contents. Details about awareness of trauma will be discussed later.

In general, seeing the short history of career setting, intensive workload, high expectation of compassion, and insufficient training, it is hard not to assume the possibility of compassion fatigue on social work professionals.

### **Self-Care**

Social Worker China Net is the official website of the China Social Work Association. Under the Psychological Counseling column, there are only 15 posts. The front page is news forwarded from the Yangzi Evening News Network (扬子晚报网) with the topic, “To be an excellent ‘social worker’? Becoming a psychological counselor is a ‘standard’” (2017). It said,

(Social worker) Wang Fangxin said that her work has to face various physical and psychological disabled people every day. At the same time, you are<sup>2</sup> (she is) also under high pressure. Then it is necessary to study and master psychology. Last year, she obtained the National Third-level Counselor Qualification Certificate and found that she is now doing successfully in work.

Although use quotation marks, the news is listing some social workers' experience of self-care, that is, to be a counselor. Under the intensive workload in a social work career, to start a new job may be hard for most social workers. Although it seems worthy to learn something new, Yona, a prosecutor, also became a counselor because of no supervision service. However, don't forget that Yona is now suffering from endless work and considering leaving.

## **Cultural and Social Ideologies**

### **Chastity and Hymen Worship**

Luo (2010) identified eight cultural themes among sexual abuse victims, three of which reflect the child sexual abuse victims mentioned in this study. The first is shame/stigma. Linda, a social worker, mentioned that the concept of chastity is causing discrimination on some female sexual abuse survivors, so many of them choose to conceal their injury. The second is guilt. Hana, a social worker, had a client who called the police about being sexually abused merely because she wanted to prove her mother-in-law that she was innocent, and she did not intentionally have intercourse with the perpetrator. This client was an adult woman who was brave enough to defend such guilt in denigrating the family honor. The third is victim ridicule/blame. Wendy, a psychological counselor, mentioned a story that a young girl was seen sitting on the perpetrator's leg by her

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<sup>2</sup> Incorrect pronoun or typographical error in the original script.



classmate, who later reported her mother, and the latter who further told the girl's mother. Although the girl was not aware of her sexual abuse experience, the emotional mother scared the child. When the child asked whether she could tell her story with uncle (the perpetrator) to her deskmate, the mother outraged and scolded her, "What a scandal!" Such intentional or unintentional blame to the child sexual abuse survivors can cause secondary trauma to children or raise trauma for those who could not have remembered the event. Meanwhile, such harm on the child sexual abuse survivors is from the outside environment that professionals can barely help.

### **Patriarchy and Parent Power**

Linda, a social worker, when describing a moment she felt powerless facing irresistible parent power, she described such parents power in China, "Under the current educational culture, guardians are very disrespectful of children's rights. On our side, a Chinese parent actually feels that 'The child is my property. The child has to listen to me, listen to my decision.' This is the situation, and this is a common social culture." Larry, a social worker, found many parents chose to move away and take away the children when CSA case happened. His work was forced to stop and he "can't do anything."

### **Collectivistic Influence**

China, with its collectivism rooted from Confucious culture and modern socialism political system, is impacting the workplace culture. Linda, a social worker, lives and cooks with her colleagues in the dormitory, the same rental apartment. Joan, a social worker, started her first CSA case because she was the director and had to take the responsibility. Lucas, a public interest lawyer, when being asked his individual experience, explained that he preferred to answer as a team and regarded the whole workplace as home. Sarah, a

counselor, stated that she often accept all the coming cases because she is concerned that not so many colleagues are available.

When the object of collectivism becomes family, professionals hold more stretch than joy. Joan, a social worker, left the previous social work position because of pregnancy. Yona, a prosecutor, felt guilty for family and planned to leave the position, “I think that I have helped so many children, but I didn’t even fulfill my mother’s duties with my own child.” Larry, a social worker, is dividing more time to life because he thought “maybe I owe a lot of time for my family.”

In conclusion, human practices are rooted in cultural and social ideologies, and people’s reaction to (child) sexual abuse is also influenced by the chastity, hymen worship, hierarchy, parents power, Yin-yang, and gender stereotypes. When found victims affected by such ideologies, though stressful, professionals are trying to help. However, these ideologies also create environments that prevent victims from recovery. Such an objective barrier is widely mentioned as the biggest challenge for professionals in this study.

### **Cooperation**

There is an absence of cooperation between the public security organs and intervention service providers. Most participants have expressed their expectation of building a cooperative relationship with professionals working with child sexual abuse survivors together. Yona, a prosecutor, talked sadly that because the public security organs did not collect sufficient confession, the prosecutors need to inquire about the child sexual abuse victim again, which may cause secondary trauma. Linda, a social worker and a director of the child sexual abuse program, shared a sexual abuse victim who did not receive prompt intervene service and experience pregnancy, abortion, and trauma.

Afterward, she has been devoting to convince the local public security organs to transfer the sexual abuse cases to social work organizations instantly, but still did not achieve so far. Sarah, a psychological counselor, said “I wish I have known him earlier!” when finally knowing the existence of a social worker for her child sexual abuse client.

With the lack of cooperations, when seeing child sexual abuse victims unable to receive a prompt intervention, all help workers must be sad. Yona, a prosecutor, who took over too many tasks, admitted that she was exhausted and wanted to leave.

Lucas as a lawyer, listed seven problems remain in law settings: the victim’s spiritual damages claims are difficult to receive supports; the protection of boys being raped remains a blank in legislation; the crime of seducing child prostitution violates children’s rights and interest; the national criminal compensation fund system is absent; the Law on the Protection of Minors in China is difficult in operation; school’s responsibility is unclear in event-oriented child sexual abuse cases.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions**

Compassion fatigue is an outcome showing a series of popular negative symptoms such as burnout and secondary trauma. Caregiving professionals especially trauma workers have been regarded as at risk for compassion fatigue. Many studies about compassion fatigue in professionals working with child sexual abuse survivors in the US have revealed the significance of studying this issue. However, no research is found in China about compassion fatigue among these professionals. To better understand professionals, to better provide professionals with support from organizations and the social system, to fill a gap in China mainland's academia, and to elicit attention on promoting caregiving professionals' mental health, this study was conducted. The qualitative research method was performed through nine in-depth interviews with professionals vary from psychological counselors, social workers, lawyer, and prosecutor.

The results showed that first, professionals have intense psychological distress. Many professionals showed syndromes of recalling, burnout, and empathy. They highly demand themselves in work, which may enhance the suffering, as they cannot find the moments feeling the sense of accomplishment.

Second, professionals are not aware of their mental status. In the interview, many professionals described their mental status with obscure words and avoided talking about feelings or did not understand the question about feelings. This reaction showed they are not trained to discover their inner feelings and self-care. More specifically, new-coming workers are not prepared for these negative emotions in working with victims, possibly shows a lack of training in school.

Third, professionals are facing challenging working environments. Most professionals overwork, having long and dynamic working hours, suffering from the massive workload, and struggle with the limited resource. The overwork experience also affects their life, causing some professionals to blur the boundary between work and life. Many professionals admitted that their working environment is “not good.” Generally speaking, the difficulties are from the social ideologies towards sexual abuse victims and lack of system support from the legal system. Specifically speaking, the working environment varies for professionals. For male professionals, they are facing both the necessity of participation and insurmountable difficulties at work. For non-profit organization managers, they encounter barriers from outreach cooperations and fund-raising. For social workers, they are suffering from high demand for workload and complexity of CSA cases, and difficulty of communicating with the CSA families. For psychological counselors, the denial from the clients, the complexity of cases, the expectation from outside fellows, and lacking outreach resource produce pressure. For legal workers, their direct access to the CSA survivors causes unavoidable secondary harms, which also affect them.

Fourth, professionals are not engaged in self-care. Similar to previous results, professionals are not trained to prepare compassion fatigue, so most seek solutions on their own. Even though social workers and psychological counselors are equipped with supervisors, the lawyer and prosecutor have no way for help. Besides, the efficacy of supervision for psychological counselors and social workers remains dubious. Most of the time, the only self-care professionals adopted is avoidance.

In further discussions, the reasons for and implications of the results are explored. First, professionals are at risks of compassion fatigue. Possible causes are: they are exposed to the extreme intensity of trauma-inducing facts; they are all caring and dedicated people with strong empathy; some have experienced similar traumatic events in their lives; those with unresolved trauma are activated by clients with similar trauma, and children traumata are provocative for caregivers. When exposing to such dangerous factors, many professionals do not receive prompt professional care or be trained to adopt appropriate self-care. Taking the social worker as an example, not until 14 years ago that professional social work career started officially evaluated. Under the rapid requirement of development, social workers are highly demanded. However, nothing about self-care or other psychological support for the professionals is found in professional training materials. Even for social worker supervisors, it is rare to see their caring towards the mental health status of social workers. In general, regarding the short history of career setting, intensive workload, high expectation of compassion, and insufficient training, it is hard not to assume the possibility of compassion fatigue on social work professionals. Therefore, many social workers turn to self-care, and some have to learn psychological counseling themselves to relieve the pressure.

Second, cultural and social ideologies affect professional work in helping child sexual abuse survivors, such barriers can generate compassion fatigue. A typical Chinese cultural ideology is chastity and hymen worship. Such ideology merges with other cultural themes: sexual shame over the loss of virginity or chastity stigmatize child sexual abuse victims; self-derogation in the a priori attribution for sexual abuse survivors; the sense of guilt in denigrating the family honor; victim ridicule and victim blame. Another social

ideology in the hierarchy such as patriarchy and parent power hinder professionals' direct connections with the child sexual abuse victims. Picking Yin and Yang from Taoist ideology combining with hymen worship is one of the grounds for child sexual abuse, in which uncultured believers think coitus with women (with Yin), especially with virgin children, can refill men (with Yang) to prolong their lives. The last social ideology is gender stereotypes, which shapes fragile women and regarded men as strong, and could further produce "unspoken" boys sexual abuse. In general, human practices are rooted in cultural and social ideologies, and people's reaction to (child) sexual abuse is also influenced by the chastity, hymen worship, hierarchy, parent power, Yin-Yang, and gender stereotypes. When found victims affected by such ideologies, though stressful, professionals are trying to help. However, these ideologies also create environments that prevent victims from recovery. Such an objective barrier is widely mentioned as the biggest challenge for professionals in this study.

Third, the language used for (child) sexual abuse impacts social ideology towards sexual abuse and sexual abuse victims. How the media describes the act of unwilling sexual contacts is transmitting the definition of sexual abuse to the public. The concept is introduced by the media and accepted by society for less than 19 years. The unfamiliarity of this concept can cause doubt or unacceptance to the public when professionals attempt to promote related education. Moreover, the definition of sexual abuse is ambiguous. Neither is it a legal term nor be explained when the criminal law listing types of sexual crime. Lack of explicit information is delaying the popularization process. The incomplete boundary of sexual abuse also dazzles people's awareness of other inappropriate sexual behaviors such as sexual harassment, and further influences the legislation, which is

discussed in the next section. Finally, the word choice of “sexual abuse invasion” and “sexual abuse harm” is uncertain. Such a gap between the academia and authorities is deepening the confusion within the people.

Fourth, undeveloped legislation cannot provide solid backup for professionals’ work. When tracing the sexual abuse in legislation, it is found that in 1979, the Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China firstly punished the crime of sexual abuse. However, sexual abuse against children was not mentioned, and sexual abuse against women was only a part of the crime of hooliganism with ambiguous definition and arbitrary stipulation. Then in 1997, the amended criminal law divided the past crime of hooliganism, so rape and molestation were firstly written in the criminal law. Finally, 11 years ago, sexual abuse against minors was firstly banned. Overall, it has been less than 40 years when sexual abuse behaviors were first written in the law and later expanded the definitions for women and children. Along with the slow development, many undeveloped barriers are disturbing the promotion of professionals’ work.

Fifth, there is an absence of cooperation between the public security organs and intervention service providers. Prosecutors ask for more well-trained public security organs to work with together. Social workers ask to build a promptly transferring system with public security organs. Psychological counselors wish to establish a network with other providers through public security organs. The lack of this cooperation may cause child sexual abuse victims unable to receive a prompt intervention, and all caregivers must be sad.

In conclusion, people must be alert to the compassion fatigue among professionals working with child sexual abuse survivors. From policy makers, textbook editors, schools,



to professionals, it is necessary to be aware of the trauma of child sexual abuse survivors and how this trauma can transmit to the professionals. The society also needs to sweep potential barriers of professionals' work from the cultural and social ideologies. Educational officers in schools, villages, and cities should advertise to abandon the harmful ideologies that may generate child sexual abuse or secondary harm to sexual abuse survivors. Moreover, legislation should refine to build school protection system and boys sexual abuse protection.

## **Limitations**

### **Chinese-English Translation Barrier**

All the qualitative information collected in this study were through interviews in Chinese Mandarin. In translating the transcript to English, the researcher found difficulties in both sustaining the original keywords and fluent expression. After searching translating techniques to balance both sides, the researcher set the priority of maintaining the source word combinations and regards grammatical polishing as an extra. However, the attempt to keep both the Chinese and English keyword may create barriers in transferring the message.

For example, as the research question is to understand the professional's individual experience, the keyword "feeling" was upheld in the transcript and related explicitly to personal emotions. In the original interview, all interviewees were asked about their emotions by "how do you feel (感受)?" but some interviewees responded their thoughts (想法) of the individual case or opinions (意见) on future work. To clarify the question, the interviewer added details such as "do you feel that from your psychological aspect..."

or “how does your mood feel about your whole work?” Such sentences are awkward in English translation while the researcher is trying not to miss the keyword “feeling.”

### **Sample Restriction**

This study adopts only nine samples ranging from three careers but digs in qualitative research of individual experiences. Nine participants are not broad enough to on behalf of professionals working with CSA in China. From the transcripts of extended interviews with four social workers, three counselors, one lawyer, and one prosecutor, as well as with detailed analysis of the data, this study is capable to answer the research question from individual’s perspectives: “How professionals working with CSA in China are managing the issue of compassion fatigue?” However, it is unconvincing that it can on behalf of most professionals working with CSA in China.

Meanwhile, the definitions of professionals in this study have their restrictions. For example, there are three types of mental health professionals in China mainland. The first is the psychological therapist (心理治疗师), or the so-called mental health doctor or psychologist with prescriptions. Psychological therapists are professionals working in healthcare organizations with the license issued by the Ministry of Health. The second is the psychological professional (心理保健师), not a nationally certified profession. The psychological professional used to receive a credential from the Chinese Medical Association, which was canceled now. The last one is the psychological counselor (心理咨询师), or the psychological consultant without prescriptions. The psychological counselor is a nationally approved profession with a certificate issued by the Ministry of Human Resource and Social Security. In 2017, the qualification examination of the psychological counselor was canceled, but the previously gained certificate remains valid.

In this study, all the counselors mentioned belongs to the last category of the psychological counselor. Yona, the prosecutor, also claimed to have a certificate of the counselor.

### **Study Design Limitation**

The study was designed as a qualitative study targeting professionals' experience working with CSA survivors. To narrow the participants, the researcher found difficulties in defining them, because no policy has mandatorily required a particular type of professionals to participate in CSA cases. Meanwhile, the Office of National Working Committee on Children and Women under State Council suggested that these professionals and organizations are responsible for following up with CSA cases:

Child Protection Office professional staff, community police station, Village/Residence Committee leaders, community health center workers, school and child care institutions, asylum stations, Children's Home, legal workers, social workers, professional counselors, people's mediators, community shelter representatives, dean of the building, Children's Committee, and Parents Committee. (p.27)

However, not only is hard for the research to find the pamphlet, but also there is no standardization requirements.

In practice, once a CSA case occurred, the witness may call the parents and some parents may choose not to call the police. Secretly, they may turn to community department or local Women's Federation. The community is a brief name for Residence Committee in which residents self-manage, self-educate, and self-service. The local Women's Federation is a branch of the All-China Women's Federation responsible for working with women and children. They are both non-governmental organizations led by the Chinese Communist Party. Therefore, if not involved in the judicial process, social workers, counselors, staff and volunteers in the community and Women's Federation work with CSA cases.

If the witness or the parents choose to call the police, then the police will take over, investigate, and discuss with the parents whether starts lawsuit. (A participant of the study, Linda, a social worker denied the efficacy. She said if the CSA case was reported during police's off-hours, the parents might be asked to turn back to the Women's Federation.) When starting a lawsuit, the police may help, or the client may research to select a judicial social worker and/or a counselor (A participant of the study, Wendy, a counselor, said she did not know the existence of another social worker until the case was over) to manage the case. Depending on the severity of the case and whether private or public prosecution, a lawyer or prosecutor will participate. Therefore, if involved in the judicial process, police officers, social workers and/or counselors, lawyers and/or prosecutors, and volunteers in the community work with CSA cases.

Because of the vague definitions of possible participants, the study did not predict well with each career's functions and did not plan a specific interview guide for each professional. The researcher also encountered barriers to find administrative professionals such as community and Women's Federation's staff and police officers.

## **Future Study**

### **Preparation for Compassion Fatigue**

Compassion fatigue is a common problem among all the professionals, while most participants in this study did not prepare for it. Lucas, a public interest lawyer, is the only person who mentioned "job burnout" in the study. He admitted that all the judicial workers have mental problems similar to compassion fatigue to a certain degree. However, before they start a judicial career, they are not necessary to preview self-care. For example, to be a lawyer, judge, prosecutor and notary, one has to pass the National Judicial Examination

from the Ministry of Justice. To study for the exam, a participant needs to review the contents for objective questions:

Paper 1: The Theory of Socialist Rule of Law with Chinese Characteristics, Jurisprudence, Constitution, Chinese Legal History, International Law, Judicial System and Legal Professional Ethics, Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure Law, Administrative Law and Administrative Procedure Law.

Paper 2: Civil Law, Intellectual Property Law, Commercial Law, Economic Law, Environmental Resources Law, Labor and Social Security Law, Private International Law, International Economic Law, Civil Procedure Law (including arbitration system). (2018)

Once they pass the objective exam, they are qualified to apply for the subjective exam, which consists of:

Socialist rule of law theory with Chinese characteristics, jurisprudence, constitution, criminal law, criminal procedure law, civil law, commercial law, civil procedure law (including arbitration system), administrative law and administrative procedure law, judicial system and legal professional ethics. (Ministry of Justice of the People's Republic of China, 2018)

The “Judicial system and Legal Professional Ethics” seems to be the only one may relate to self-care, but according to the officially published Outline of the National Certified Legal Profession Qualification Examination in 2018, it only refers to:

Chapter I Socialist Judicial System with Chinese Characteristics

Chapter II Judges' Professional Ethics

Chapter III Prosecutor's Professional Ethics

Chapter IV Lawyer's Professional Ethics

Chapter V Notary Professional Ethics

Chapter VI Professional Ethics of Other Legal Professionals. (2018)

Therefore, similar to the study guide for social workers, the outline for legal professionals also do not require understandings of psychological distress and preparation for self-care. It is still unknown whether such professional students can study more self-care in school. Future study targetting in professionals working with CSA survivors can focus on the self-care contents in their career path. To further understand professionals

working experience, it is also suggested to expand the participants in sample size and variety.

### **Police Officers**

In comparing the CSA Professionals and their working barriers, it is noticed that a type of frequent mentioned professional is not shown up in this study—police officers.

Joan, the social worker, found comfort when comparing her job with other CSA professional fellows. When a client kept silent in front of police officers, she was able to open her mouth.

Because after all, police officers have their roles positioning, it may not necessarily have the feeling of warmth on people. [laugh] I always feel that the feeling of social workers will be a little more intimate because when working as a social worker myself, my relationship with the client will also be... the handling will be better. (Joan, social worker)

In addition to the unpleasant “feeling” it transmits to people, police officers are facing enormous workload, and probably are the professionals who meet CSA victims the most.

Where most (victims) ask for help is the public security department. Therefore, the public security department is the fastest (department) that reaching the sexual abuse party. It is the fastest and the most. (Linda, social worker)

With the large work demand for police officers, if they fail in a chain of working, they can influence CSA survivors negatively.

If the public security organ transferred it to us from the beginning, she might not have to go through the process of abortion. So when she found us, when she was transferred to us, she had actually suffered from a very serious secondary harm. (Linda, social worker)

To avoid secondary harm, when working with CSA survivors, police officers should be very cautious. However, as a police officer, they must record the statement and ask questions, during which there is imminent secondary harm.

If you, the case handling agency, the police, if your way and attitude are wrong in recording the confession, then this kind of secondary harm is even more obvious. If you repeatedly ask them, including details, if you call the child to the Interpol Brigade, to the Public Security Bureau to inquire, then it will naturally cause them secondary harms, right? (Lucas, lawyer)

Therefore, combining the social impressions, large workload, strict requirement, administrative restrictions, etc., when working with CSA survivors, police officers are at risk of compassion fatigue. For future studies, to further understand professionals working experience, it is suggested to expand the participants in sample size and variety.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

Table 1: Interview Guide (English original)

Table 2: Interview Guide (Chinese translation)

Table 3: Professionals' Emotions in Answers

### Appendix B

Figure 1: "Sexual Abuse" on Google Trends

Figure 2: "Sexual Abuse Invasion" on Google Ngram

Figure 3: "Sexual Abuse Harm" on Google Ngram



## Appendix A

**Table 1: Interview Guide (English original)**

### **Work**

What do you do generally in working with survivors?  
Can you tell me a time you liked your job most and felt most successful?  
What are you most proud of in this work?  
What are the biggest challenges in working with these survivors?  
How do you overcome this challenge?  
Can you tell me the time you felt most helpless in your job?  
How do you manage that situation?

### **Feeling**

Overall, how do you feel about working with survivors?  
What brings you this feeling?  
How do you feel about having this feeling?  
Do you think this feeling impacts you? How?  
Does this feeling continue after work?

### **Self-care**

How do you react to this feeling?  
How do you decide that action?  
How do you do self-care after work?  
Who else have taken care of you after work?  
How do you think of these car?

## **Table 2: Interview Guide (Chinese translation)**

### **工作经历:**

您一般工作中都做些什么？

您可以分享一个您觉得您最热爱您的工作，或者觉得您的工作最成功的一个瞬间吗？

您觉得工作中什么事情让您最有成就感，觉得最骄傲？

和这些受害儿童工作的时候，您觉得最大的挑战是什么？

您是怎么尝试克服这个挑战的？

您可以分享一下您工作中觉得最无助的一个瞬间吗？

您是怎么处理这种情况的？

### **个人感受:**

总的来说，您对于帮助受性侵儿童有什么感受？

您觉得是什么让您有这种感受的呢？

您怎么看待您的这种感受呢？

您觉得这种感受影响您了吗？怎么影响的？

这种感受持续了多久？

### **自理方式:**

您是怎么处理这种感受的？

您是怎么作出这种选择的？

您如何在下班时间照顾您自己？

有没有其他人试着在您下班后照顾您？

您怎么看待这些人？

**Table 3: Professionals' Emotions in Answers**

<b>Keyword</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Context</b>
Surprised	How do you generally feel that in this first experience of assisting children who are sexually abused?	Hana: This case of her, I think it surprised me, because the case I thought before was not like this.	The case was different from what she thought.
Surprised	“What did it feel like?”	Sarah: “In fact, I still feel a bit surprised. Because after all I have never encountered this situation.”	The case had accidents that never encountered.
Worried; Keep thinking;	Then how do you feel about this case?	Hana: That is... my feeling is, I think she won't let us help her... [...] I still worry that if... I will be thinking, if they continue to let us serve, or if they do not let us serve like now, will there be different results? But I can only think about it, then I will worry... [...] Now I... I am still thinking.	Talking about thoughts/views on the experience
Doubtful	Those things, these rejections or seeing their decisions, such as do not want to continue to develop. How do you feel?	Hana: [sigh] At the beginning, I doubted. I thought. Is it really useful for us to do this?	Doubted self-ability because of parents of victims' misunderstandings, unbelief, and disagreements.
Relieved	In general, how do you feel about helping these sexually abused children?	Hana: How do (I) feel about helping them? [silence] [...] But I see that I have a colleague who did before, a case of the bullying on campus, the client is coming back and going to school now, or other developments are quite good. I feel very relieved.	About the improvement/change of the child.

<b>Keyword</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Context</b>
Happy	...for example, do you generally think that your work is stressful, making you painful? Or, does it make you challenged, but happy? There are all kinds of adjectives. How do you describe the experience and mood of your work?	Hana: [...] Sometimes I am very happy to see their changes, I feel that what I am doing makes sense.	Described mainly the work itself and mentioned self-feelings less.
Positive	“What kind of mood did you feel when you understood and accepted her emotions...?”	Sarah: “I would feel like, for my technique I feel (confident), because I’ve used it before. I still feel quite positive to help her.”	Described feelings in doing the case.
Apathy	“...but in the first time you received such kind of child sexual abuse cases, you received a quite thorny, somewhat heavy one. What was your mood at that time?”	Lucas: “[...] I am also a father now. My eldest is a daughter, three and a half years old. In fact, in many cases of child sexual abuse, when a girl is sexually abused, the victim is about the same age as my daughter.”	Compared the victim-children to professional’s (Lucas) own child.
Heavy		Lucas: “Therefore, I think that in the case of child sexual abuse, you cannot say which one is relatively easy or heavy. There is no such a statement. Basic is about comparing (which one is) even worse. It is definitely in a heavy mood. There is no doubt about this.”	Indirectly mentioned the feelings on the case rather than personal feelings.
Job burnout	“For example, in your emotions. Would you often feel that there are some negative emotions, or would you try to solve them? Or would you have more positive emotions?”	Lucas: “We have also explored this issue. Being a public-service lawyer for a long time, including long-term exposure to public interest, dealing with these vulnerable, these poor and weak, these underprivileged venerable groups, many people have discussed whether it will cause the problem of job burnout.”	The first and the only one mentioned “job burnout.”
Motivated	“What is your mood? Overall in doing this job?”	Linda: “The overall mood is (I am) very motivated to do. [silence]”	Repeated question about general feelings

<b>Keyword</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Context</b>
Nothing	“At that time, since you knew it was a minor issue, would you feel that it would be difficult to do this for the first time? Or what is your feeling at the time?”	Linda: “I didn’t think too much at the time, [...] Therefore, I felt that it was only about specifically working for sexual abuse cases. Therefore, when I started doing it, there was nothing, neither I feel difficult, nor I felt any psychological burden, or...nothing.”	When asking her feelings about working for sexual abuse cases when transferred from community work.
Encouraging Motivated Confident	“What will your mood be like? How is your emotion?”	Linda: “The emotions at that time would feel very encouraging. I feel that under our company, the living conditions of the sexual abuse party can really be improved. [...] There is a strong motivation to continue to do this thing well, to create a better living environment for this sexual abuse party. (I am) more motivated and then more confident to engage in services in this field.”	When asking her feelings about having accomplishments in work
Regretful Positive encouragement Encouraging	“What are your feelings every time you think about these two people?”	Linda: “For example, the first little girl, I feel regretful. Until now I still feel regretful. This regret has not decreased. As for the sexual abuse party, the woman, (I feel) a positive encouragement, that is, a very firm belief that I am definitely able to protect, to protect the client as long as I try my best efforts. It is kind of encouraging.”	When asking her feelings about recalling her first child sexual abuse victim and her first sexual abuse client.
Confident	“In general, in helping children who are sexually abused and doing child sexual abuse project, what do you feel?”	Linda: “Therefore, on the one hand, I know that there are many difficulties; but on the one hand, I am confident in doing it. I will continue to work in this service field. I also believe that as long as I continue to do so, and push more people to work in this field, their living environment will improve.”	Hesitated; Feelings in general
Helpless; Not good state;	You sound helpless (when talking about work affects life).	Joan: Yes. [...] But at the time, I really felt that, because I had a family, and then you had to deal with family relations and work. Actually, the state at that time was not really good, and the work pressure was indeed quite high.	When recalling the previous (two years ago) working experience

<b>Keyword</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Context</b>
Pressure	“Then have you felt unpleasant? Are there any negative emotions?”	Linda: “Yes, there are a lot of work pressure.”	A polar question inquiring negative emotions
Limited happy;	How do you feel when facing the children and their recovery?	Larry: Of course, (I am) very, happy, but it is still relatively limited. Truly speaking, if for her, to be completely no such thing at all (sexual abuse affect), then from the view of grief, I think it takes at least two years.	
Empathy	Do you think sometimes you get stuck in it?	Larry: I think that sometimes I would think, if that is my own child, will I be like this parent? It may also be a big challenge for me. Because if it is really my own little kid, then for those I was told, am I willing to accept them? Am I going to try? How will I view this kid in my own home? What is my future? I think I may have more thought about this thing.	
Uncertain	“So you are quite confident?”	Sarah: “[...] To what extent we can help, in fact, I am also not sure...you just mentioned the word “confident.” But I think one thing is certain, that is...”	Avoided an explicit response on a “yes or no” question. Maybe indirect admit. Turned to self-reflections on the case.
Not panic	“Aren’t you panic?”	Sarah: “No, that’s normal, because her response was actually quite normal.”	Disagreed with the emotion for the case
Tired; Dizzy; Taunt; Worried;	What kind of mood did you feel when you left?	Joan: Tired. [sign][laugh] It is true. I was really tired. Dizzy, the head felt dizzy. Because you have been in a highly concentrated state, taunt, the entire nerves were taut. Because you were actually worried when you went, because you were afraid that the result was something you can’t accept. Right.	

<b>Keyword</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Context</b>
Heavy; Sad; Angry; Complicated	What I mean is, for example, do you think that you are happy in general? Or is it generally more complicated? The pressure is greater? Or what? From the mood of an individual, what is your emotions?	Larry: Personal emotions I think are still quite heavy. This is a case in mainland China, not only in China, but I think for the entire Chinese community, it is a topic people are all unwilling to touch, or that it is best to hide, and indeed it is all very sad and makes people angry. Even people think, “Ah, why does the world look like this?” Such emotions, or more complicated.	
Happy	Can I understand that you are actually doing something that makes you unhappy, but you feel that if you do not do, others will not do it. So you have to do?	Larry: I don't think I'm not happy. Happy moments are still... For example, when we do popularization education, I actually think it's still pretty good. [...] They will not ask their fathers and mothers, nor will they ask their teachers, suddenly they have a window to ask, and then they are very happy, and then I think we will be very happy.	
Happiness ; Pressure; Heavy;	I see. So it is a work full of happiness, then a lot of pressure, and some heavy work, right?	Larry: Yes. Yes.	General feelings about work
Panicked;	Then you met this girl this time, is your heart still as panicky as you met the aunt?	Hana: At first I panicked, but later I saw that she was very relaxed and could open it. Later, it got better.	Meeting the first child sexual abuse victim
Ups and downs; Unexpected;	Then when you have two cases with quite great differences going on at the same time. Does your mood need a lot of such adjustments and ups and downs?	Hana: [silence] It happened when I just picked up, but because this first case is that it didn't have so many negative emotions, it was mainly the influence of the second case. It was bigger, because it really showed what I didn't think I can handle before, that is, her emotion was out of control. She did not want to try any methods. She kept hiding and didn't come out.	

<b>Keyword</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Context</b>
See it through	Then you just said that your mood was just beginning from doubting your ability, then what happened next? Is there a change?	Hana: I later felt that in fact, social workers also need to grow up themselves. Later, I feel that social workers are not omnipotent. We can't do everything for the client. [...] So I feel that I see it through later. If I can continue to do it, I will do my best. If I can't do it, it is their choice.	
Angry; Exasperated;	Because of him, do you feel very painful? very sad?	Hana: I will be very angry, there is a feeling of exasperation at his failure to make good. Sometimes.....	When facing uncontrollable child with risks of involving crime again
Less stressful; Calm; Relieved; Glad;	Then when you saw her, knew that she was the one you had helped before, and recognized her, did you feel changed? Were you slightly less stressful or were you...?	Joan: Yes, I was less stressful. Because I was certain about the situation. Right, and then slowly when she was willing to say the process of how the thing happened, I was much less stressful, calmer. After all, because my relationship with her, I feel that it has been built up slowly, and the trust relationship was fine. So when she was willing to tell me these things, I felt very relieved. I think (that was) what I felt at that time, I was also glad that this thing has not gone further in a worse direction.	Emotions improved when meeting the victim and understanding the situation was better than expectation.
Doubtful; Uncertain; Brave;	Don't you think that these challenges have made you feel uncomfortable?	Joan: [...] I would feel, uh ... I would doubt how much I could help her after all. Am I helping right? Is it enough? Am I doing right? At that time, there were always such ideas. [...] But at the time, because I was also the director of the center, so my psychological endurance was that at least I was able to, dare to contact, not like some social workers may reject, saying, "no I can't, this is beyond my ability". At least I would think, I can do, I can pick it up, like this. Well, I will try.	



## Appendix B

Figure 1: “Sexual Abuse” on Google Trends

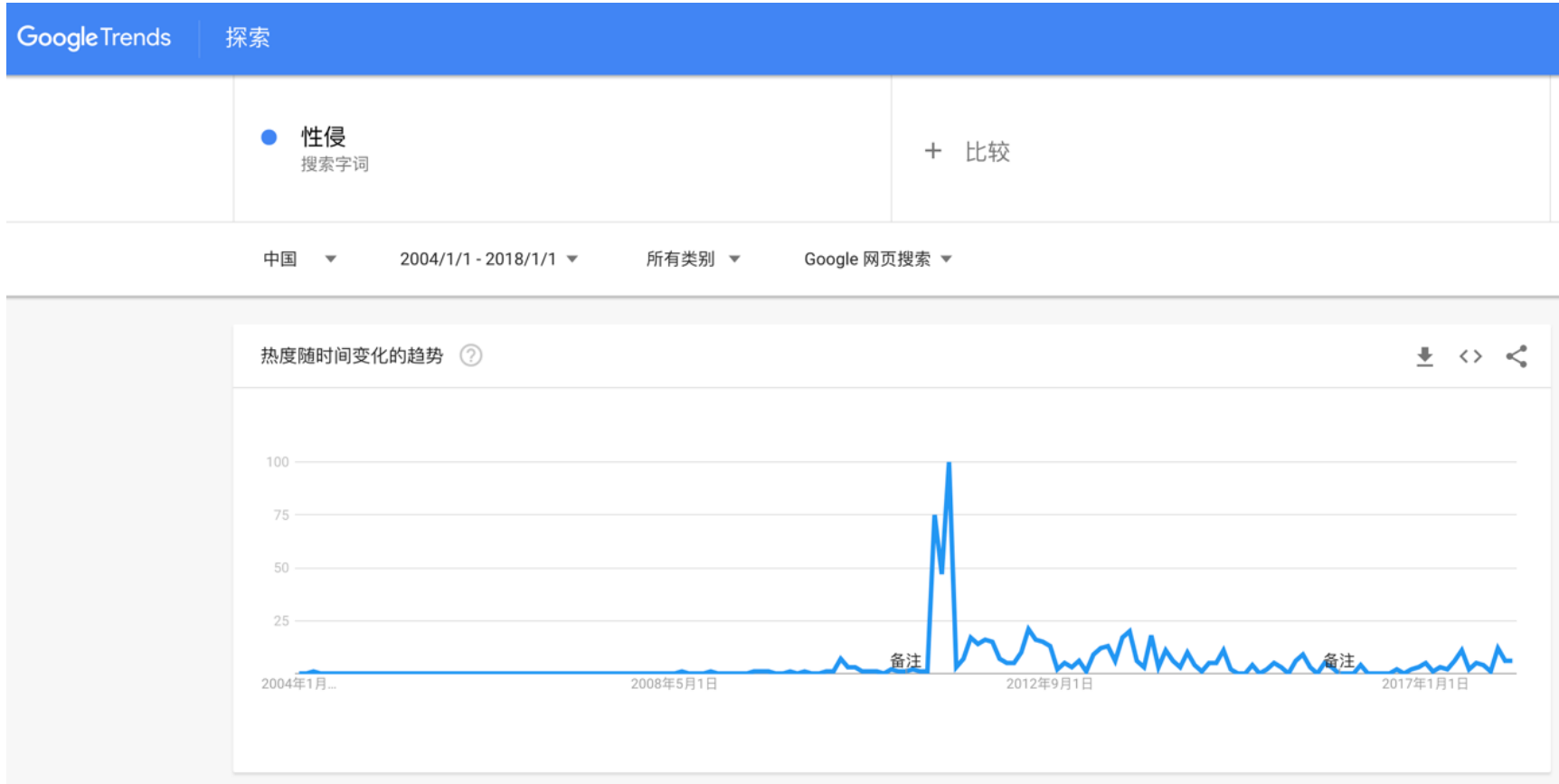


Figure 2: “Sexual Abuse Invasion” on Google Ngram

# Google Books Ngram Viewer

Graph these comma-separated phrases: 性侵犯  case-insensitive

between 1978 and 2008 from the corpus Chinese (simplified) with smoothing of 0 Search lots of books

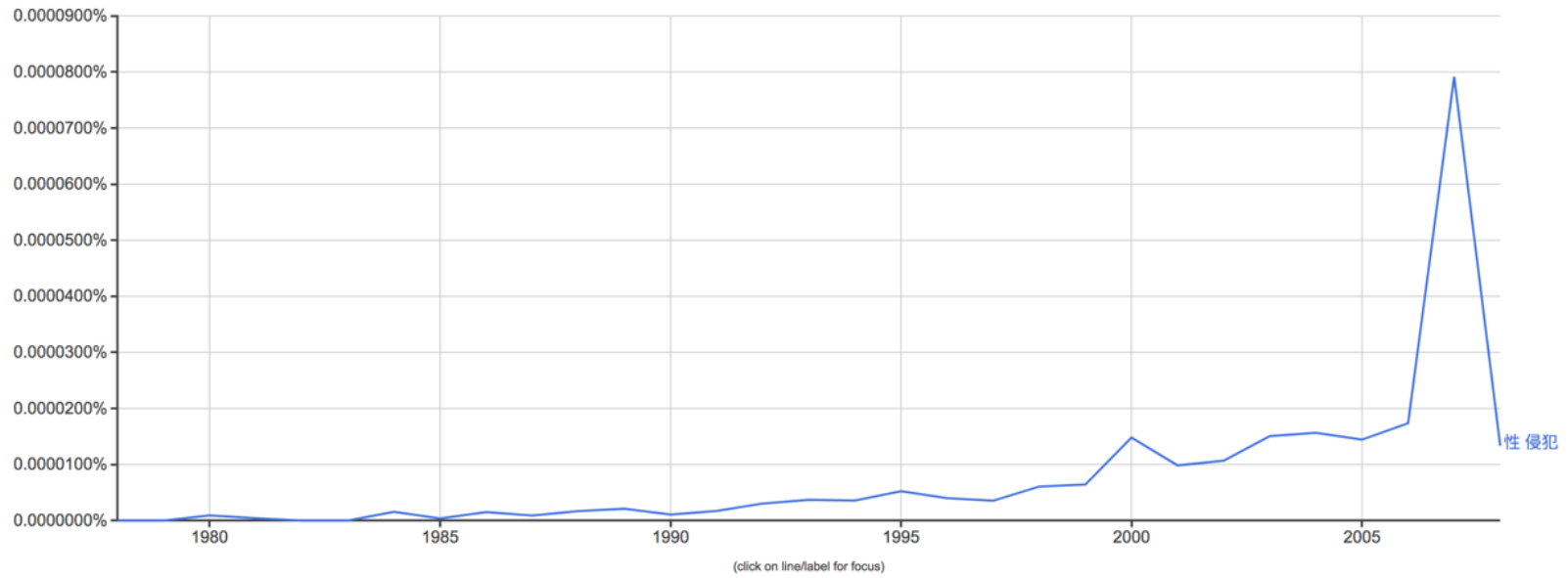
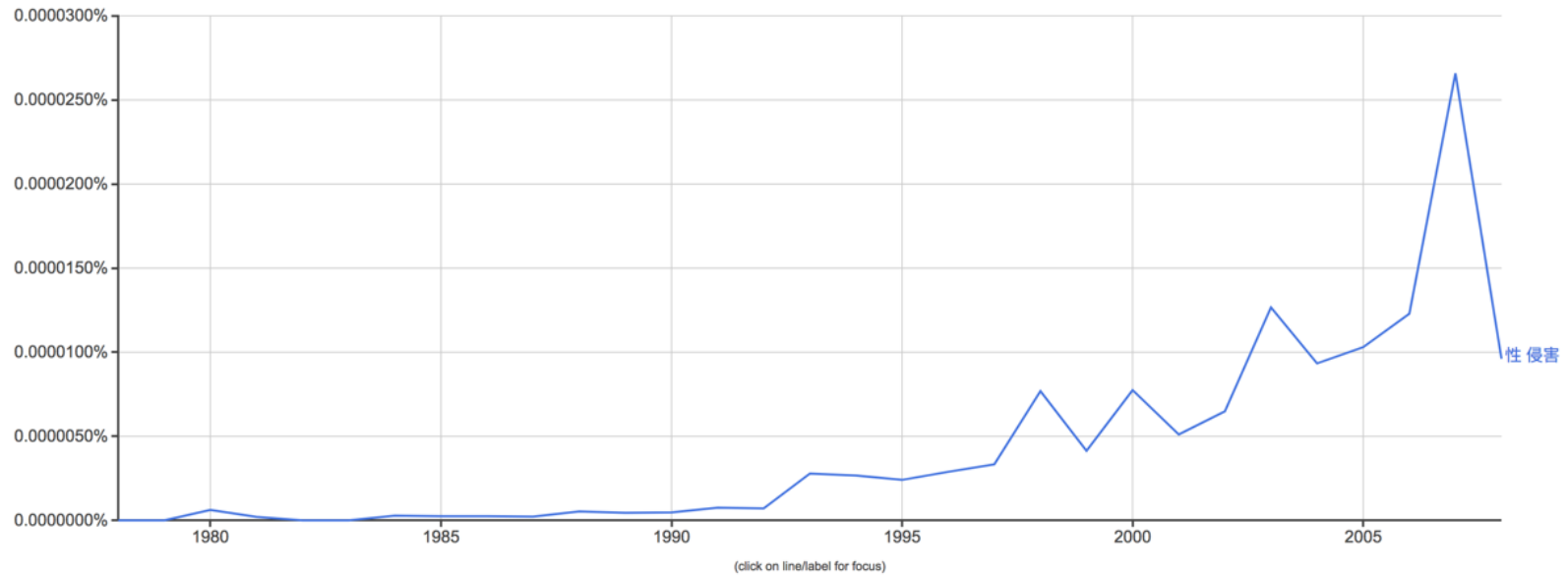


Figure 3: “Sexual Abuse Harm” on Google Ngram

Google Books Ngram Viewer

Graph these comma-separated phrases: 性侵害  case-insensitive

between 1978 and 2008 from the corpus Chinese (simplified) with smoothing of 0 Search lots of books



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Zhang, H. (2014). *ICU hu shi tong qing xin pi fa yu zhi ye ren tong de diao cha yan jiu* [A Study On the Relationship Between Compassion Fatigue and Professional Identity Among Critical Care Nurse in ICU Department]. (Master Thesis, Shandong University).

# Curriculum Vitae

Aoxuan Cao

## Education

### Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)

August 2016—August 2019

Master of Arts in Applied Communication with concentration in Health Communication

### Minzu University of China (MUC), Beijing, China

September 2011—June 2015

Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy

### Vytautas Magnus University (VMU), Kaunas, Lithuania

January—June 2014

Exchange Student in Philosophy

## Honors, Awards, Fellowships

Travel Fellowship Award (\$462.75) March 2018

Spring 2018 Travel Grant (\$500) March 2018

Joan and Larry Cimino Award for Excellence in Intercultural Communication March 2017

Second Class of Scholarship June 2015

Excellent Article Award in China University Media Union (CUMU) July 2015

Excellent Award in National Undergraduate Innovation Training Program (GCCX) July 2015

Excellent Award in Winter Social Research Practice April 2012

### **Conferences Attended**

**Cao, A. & Balaji, V.** (2018). What's In A Name? : Challenging Possible Myths Of International Consultants. Roundtable session presented at East Central Writing Center Association Conference (ECWCA), Columbus, OH.

**Cao, A.** (2017). Metaphors of Cancer in Chinese News Media. Paper session presented at Communication, Medicine, and Ethics Conference (COMET), Indianapolis, IN. (peer reviewed)

### **Publications**

**Cao A.** (2015). Outside the Ivory Tower—Those Sad Young Men. Utopia.

**Cao A., Sui Y., Bao X., & Zhang X.** (2014). Vietnamese Brides on the Border Line. China Economic Information, (20), 70-72.

**Xiao M., & Cao A.** (2013). Civil Report Suggested to Establish Social Construction Committee. 21st Century Business Herald, p. 005.

### **Research and Training Experience**

**“What's In A Name? : Challenging Possible Myths Of International Consultants.”**

*First author and co-researcher, Indianapolis*

January—March 2018

Interviewed seven clients after session in the University Writing Center about their perspective's on the consultant's identity, ability, and perception; found international consultants' name choice affects their self-identification, pedagogies, cultural or disciplinary preference.

The research with open-ended discussions led other international consultants to share how they make choices regarding their names, how names impact on their identities, how they consider themselves in the writing center, and how they are perceived by writers in the Writing Center.

This project joined a roundtable session and was presented at East Central Writing Center Association Conference (ECWCA), Columbus, OH.

### **Girls' Protecting (Non-Profit Organization), China**

*Vice-president, Dongguan*

January 2018—Present

Discovered needs of anti-child sexual abuse education in Dongguan, an immigrant city; wrote proposal clearly and co-founded the first local team in Dongguan, China;

Recruited lecturers by writing blog (WeChat official account); organizing monthly online training, assigned daily tasks; and answered questions for participants;

*Lecturer, Dongguan & Guangzhou*

July 2017—Present

Taught/instructed children under 14 years old anti-sexual abuse education;

Demonstrated effective methods of dealing with potential/ongoing/after sexual abuse;

Provided support for children and parents with questions about child sexual abuse;

### **“Metaphors of Cancer in Chinese News Media.”**

*Advisor: Dr. Elizabeth Goering*

*Author and researcher, Indianapolis*

December 2016—June 2017

Examined the types of metaphors found in written Chinese to describe cancer by random selecting ten out of each month's results in 2016's news; identified four main types of

metaphors to define cancer: as a process, as a supernatural power, as an organism, and as war.

The paper persuasively shows how intercultural factors, such as these types of metaphors, could have a large influence upon the effectiveness of patient-provider communication, particularly between Chinese expatriates and native health care practitioners in the United States.

In March 2017, this independent research project won the Joan and Larry Cimino Award for Excellence in Intercultural Communication.

In June 2017, this project joined the paper session and be presented at Communication, Medicine, and Ethics Conference (COMET), Indianapolis, IN.

### **Chinese Labor Inspection (Non-Profit Organization), China**

*Author and co-researcher*

July—August 2013

Conducted an undercover fieldwork study by living and working with general immigrant workers in a selected factory for 28 days; observed and interviewed over 30 workers; wrote clearly and detailed about factory life and local labor union;

The article “Outside the Ivory Tower—Those Sad Young Men” won the Excellent Article Award in China University Media Union (CUMU) in July 2015;

Data collected attributed to a national study and won the Excellent Award in National Undergraduate Innovation Training Program (GCCX) in July 2015;