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The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

Children Exposed to Domestic Violence

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(The Hong Kong Council of Social Service)

Framework

1. Definition of 'Witness'
2. How many are 'witnessing'?
3. Impact of witness
4. Legislative Response

1. Definition of 'Witness'

- **Seeing** a mother assaulted or demeaned
- **Hearing** loud conflict and violence
- Seeing the **aftermath** (e.g. injuries)
- **Learning** about what happened to mother
- Being **used** by an abusive parent as part of the abuse

2. How many are 'witnessing'?

Canada

- Where there is spousal violence, children have seen violence or threats in **37%** of households
- About 70% of children who witnessed spousal violence saw or heard assaults against their mothers

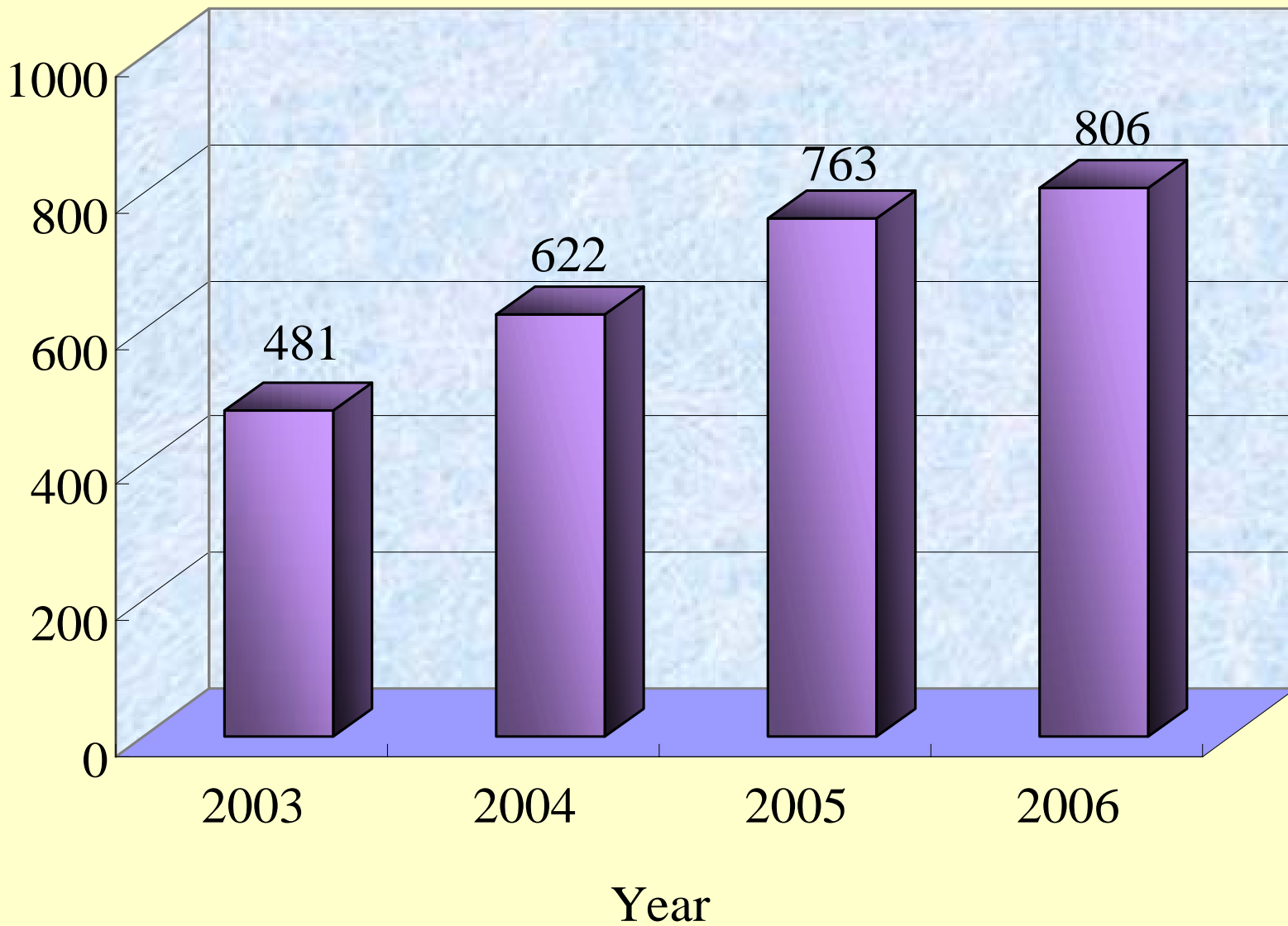
2. How many are 'witnessing'?

Hong Kong

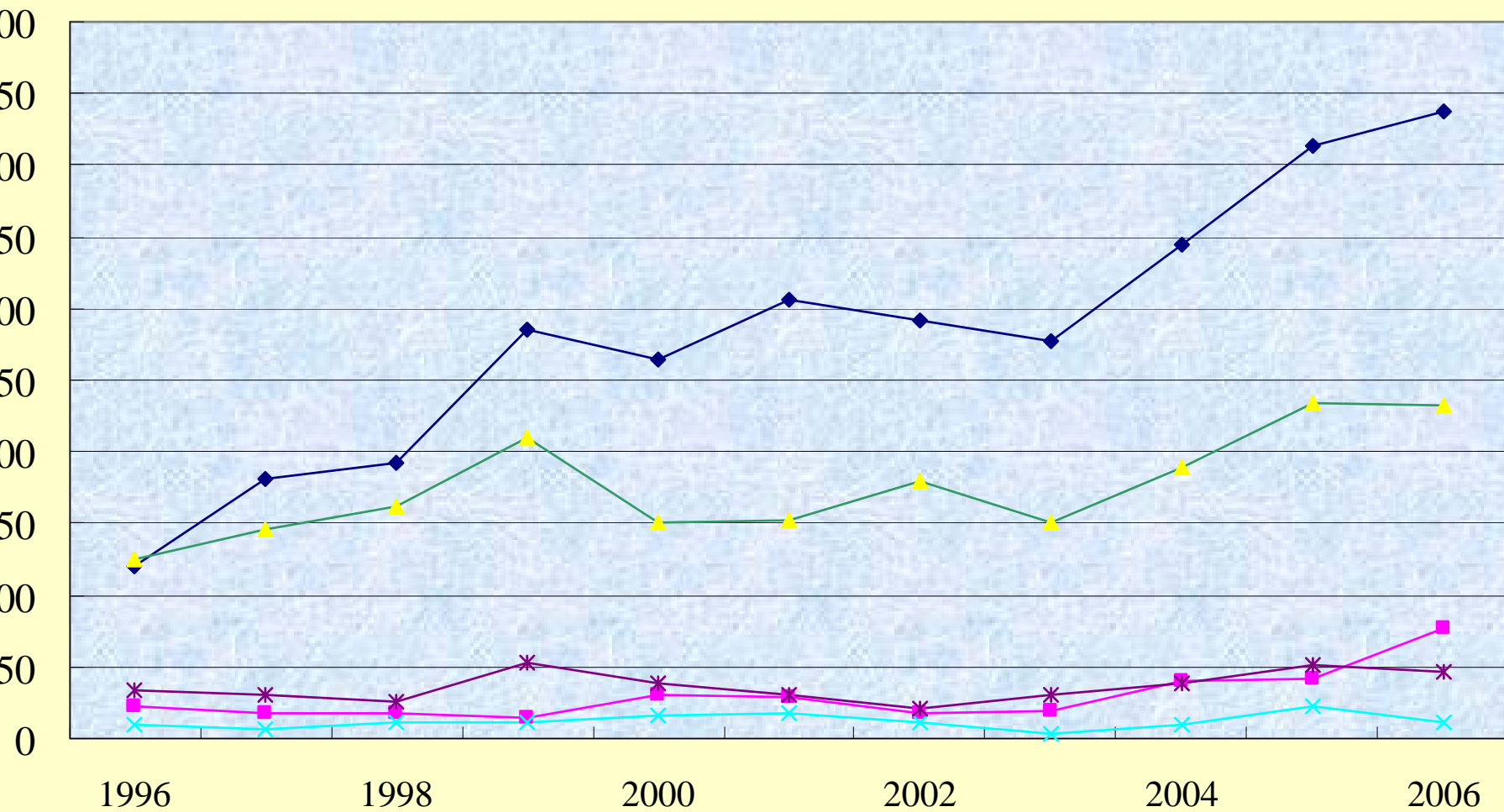
- CPR, SWD

Year	CPR Cases	% Increased
2003	481	/
2004	622	29%
2005	763	23%
2006	806	6%

Child Protection Registry



Number of Child Abuse Case - Form of abuse



◆ Physical Abuse

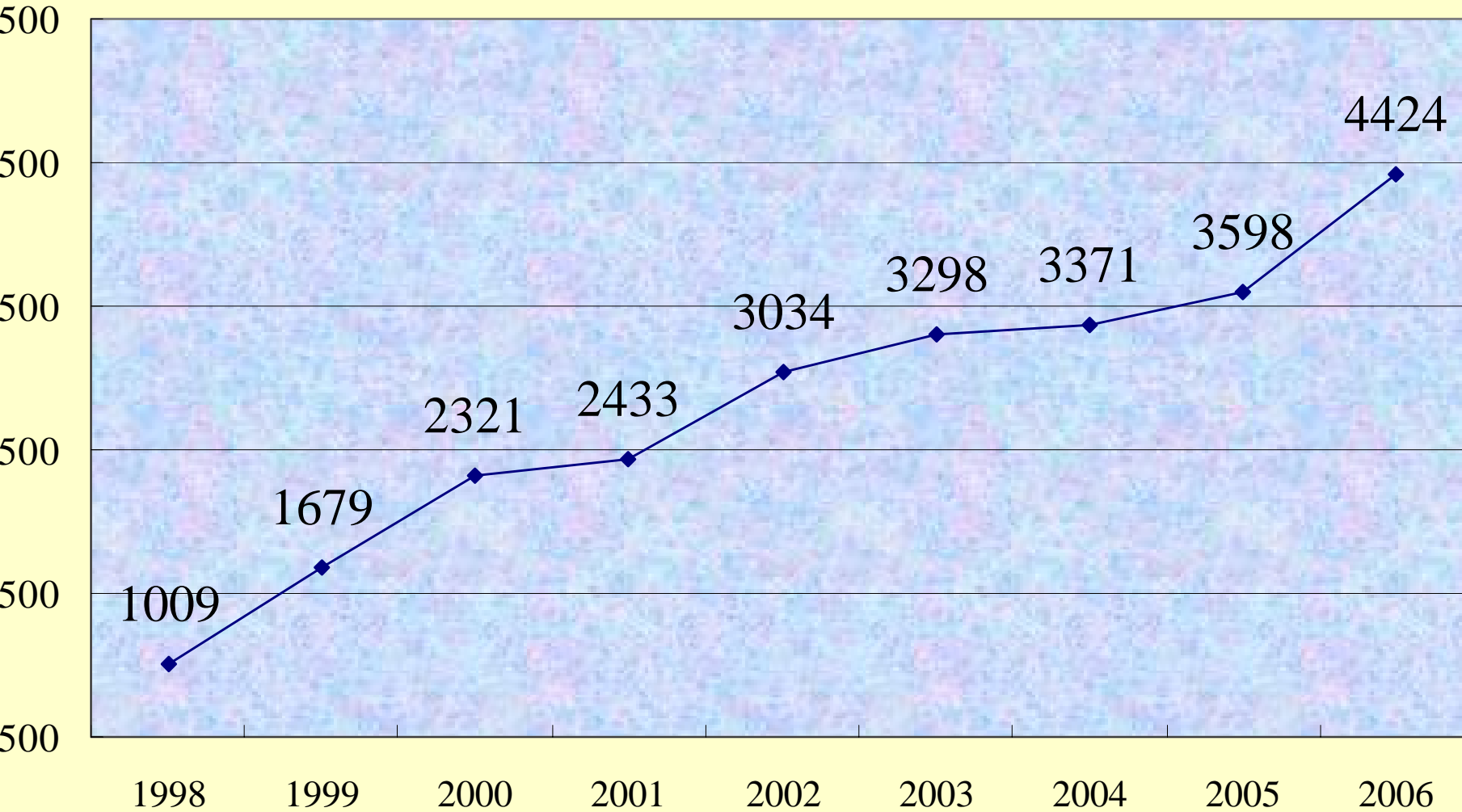
■ Neglect

▲ Sexual Abuse

× Psychological Abuse

* Multiple Abuse

Battered Spouse Cases



2. How many are 'witnessing'?

- According to Census, average Domestic Household Size is 3
- In 2006, there were 4,424 spousal abuse cases, with 37% projection, there are about **1,600** child victims

2. How many are 'witnessing'?

- K.L. Chan (2005) 'Study on Child Abuse and Spouse Battering (Part One)'
 - 10% respondent indicated that they had experience spouse abuse in the past 12 mths
 - Projected that there are about 160, 000 adults, i.e. **80,000 families** facing spouse battering issue

3. Impact of Witness

1. Behavioral and Emotion Problems
2. Cognitive and Attitudinal Problems
3. Longer-Term Problems

Behavioral and Emotion Problems

- More aggressive and **antisocial** behaviors (externalized)
- Fearful and inhibited behaviors (internalized)
- Lower social competence
- Higher average anxiety, **depression**, **trauma** symptoms, and temperament problems
- Significant factor in predicting a child violent behavior

Cognitive and Attitudinal Problems

- Increased violence exposure associated with **lower cognitive functioning**
- Use of violence and **conflict resolution**

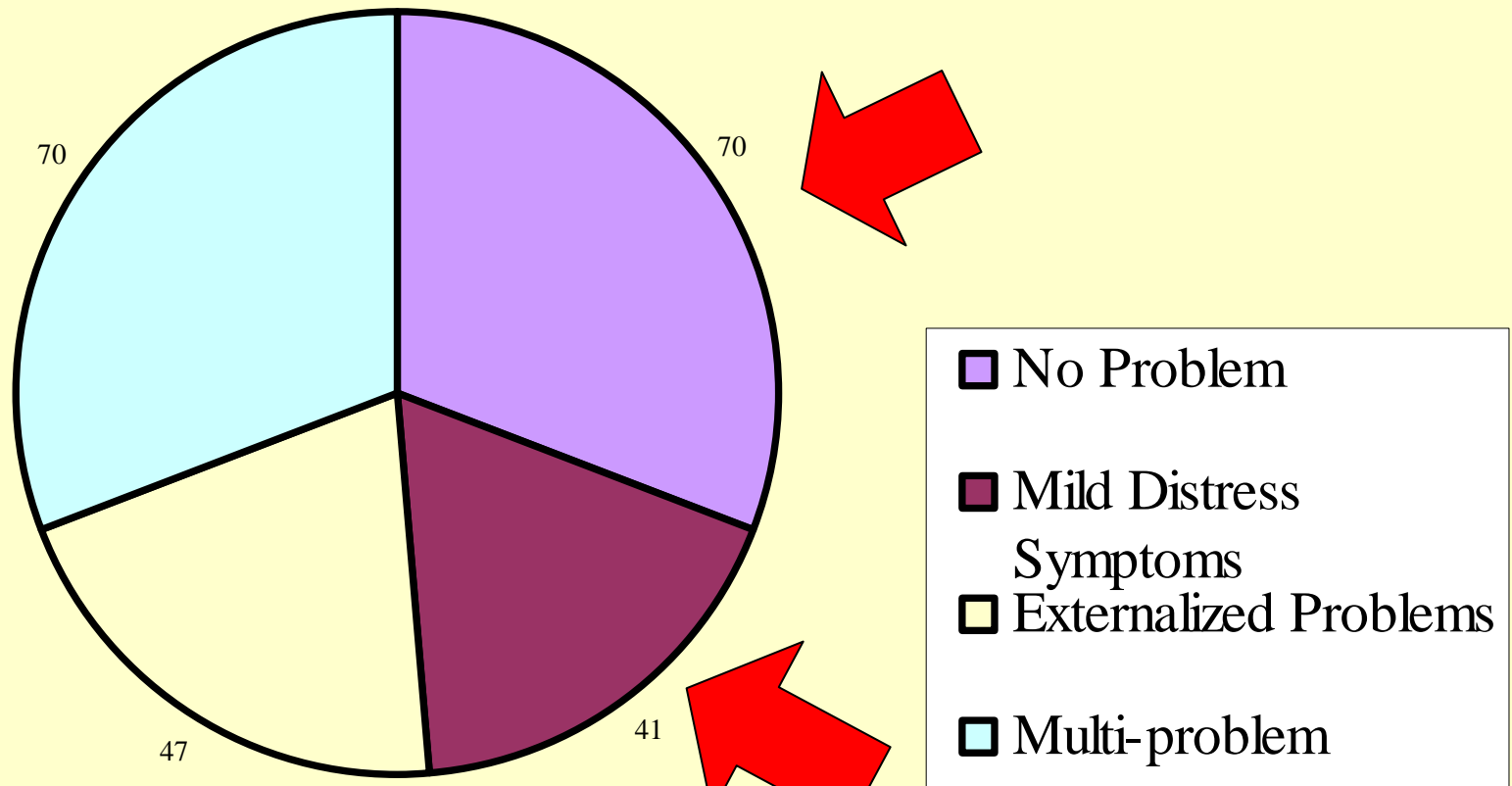
Longer-Term Problems

- 550 **undergraduate** students (Silvern et al., 1995):
 - Women: depression, trauma-related symptoms, low self-esteem
 - Men: trauma-related symptoms
- 123 **adult women** (Henning et al., 1996)
 - Experienced greater distress and lower social adjustment

Children Varying Experience

Grych et al. (2000)

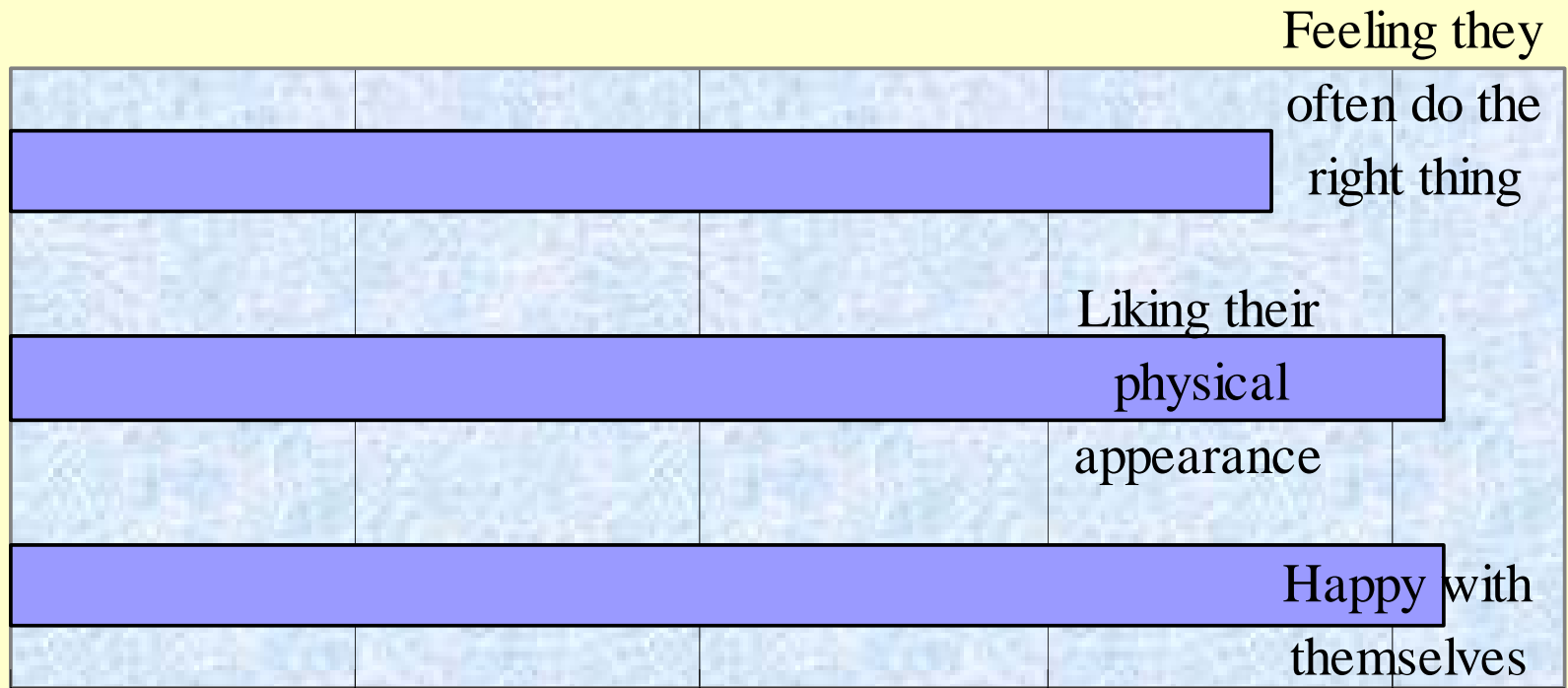
Children Varing Experience in Shelther



Children Varying Experience

Sullivan et al. (2000)

Children aged 7 -11 in Shelter



0% 20% 40% 60% 80%

Children Varying Experience

- Level of **violence** in families
- Level of child **exposure** to violence
- Exposure to other **stressors**
- **Risk** of harm
- Individual **coping skills**
- **Protective** and risk factors

4. Legislative Response

- New laws on childhood exposure
- Expanding definition of maltreatment
- Minnesota experience

New Laws on Childhood Exposure

- At least **16 states in US** and **6 Canadian provinces**, **New South Wales** in Australia
- Both criminal and civil laws to specifically address
- Utah (July, 1997): commission of adult DV 2 or more times in the presence of a child a **separate criminal offense**
- California: presence of child may bring **enhanced criminal penalties**
- Oregon: misdemeanor assault may be elevated to a felony case

Expanding definition of maltreatment

- Form of Child Neglect: failure to protect
- The National Child Abuse and Neglect Clearinghouse (2000) suggested that **operational definitions** of child neglect across the US include spouse abuse in child presence
- New South Wales passed the Care and Protection Act of 1998

Minnesota Experience



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- In 1999, Minnesota State Legislature expanded the definition of child neglect
- In 2000, Minnesota Association of Community Social Service Administrators reported that most counties in state experienced a **50% to 100% increase** in child protection reports that involved exposure to adult DV
- Need for over **US\$ 30M** in expanded services

Minnesota Experience

- **Repealed** the change in April 2000
- Legislature will reinstitute the change *only if sufficient funding is found* to accompany the change in definition

Why need to define as child abuse?

- Enhance society to identify children: **early intervention** and prevention
- Increased services to children
- Increased professional **awareness**
- Compels guardians to act
- Important societal message

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Why not to define as child abuse?

- Abused mothers are **re-victimized**
- **Resistance** of seeking assistance
- Could make potentially violent situation worse
- Increased trauma to child
- Intrusive and harmful involvement in low-risk families
- Overwhelming an already **burdened system**
- Services **diverted** away from high-risk children

Implication to Hong Kong

- Low reporting rate on child abuse
- Neglect of child Neglect
- Arouse public, as well as professions, awareness
- Feasibility of mandatory reporting mechanism



Resource

- Jaffe, P.G., Baker, L.L. & Cunningham, A. (2004). Protecting Children From Domestic Violence: Strategies for Community Intervention. New York, NY: Guilford Press
- <http://www.endabuse.org>
- <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/index.html>
- http://www.lfcc.on.ca/children_exposed_to_domestic_violence.html

Children See Children DO

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<http://www.childfriendly.org.au/streaming1.htm>





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~Thanks~