

When the child reveals a sexual abuse: the real-life experience of the couple, its functions and the consequences

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Theoretical framework

A lot of studies (Davies, 1995; Dyb and al., 2003; Cyr and al., 2011; Elliot and Carnes, 2001; Kaléidos, 2008; Van Toledo and Seymour, 2013)
→ high level of distress after disclosure

BUT:

- Focus on parents individually
- Without focusing on the real experience

Objective and interest

- Couple dynamic ?
- Parental suffering → child's suffering

Hypothesis

Distress significantly present inside the couple after the child's sexual abuse disclosure

Methodology

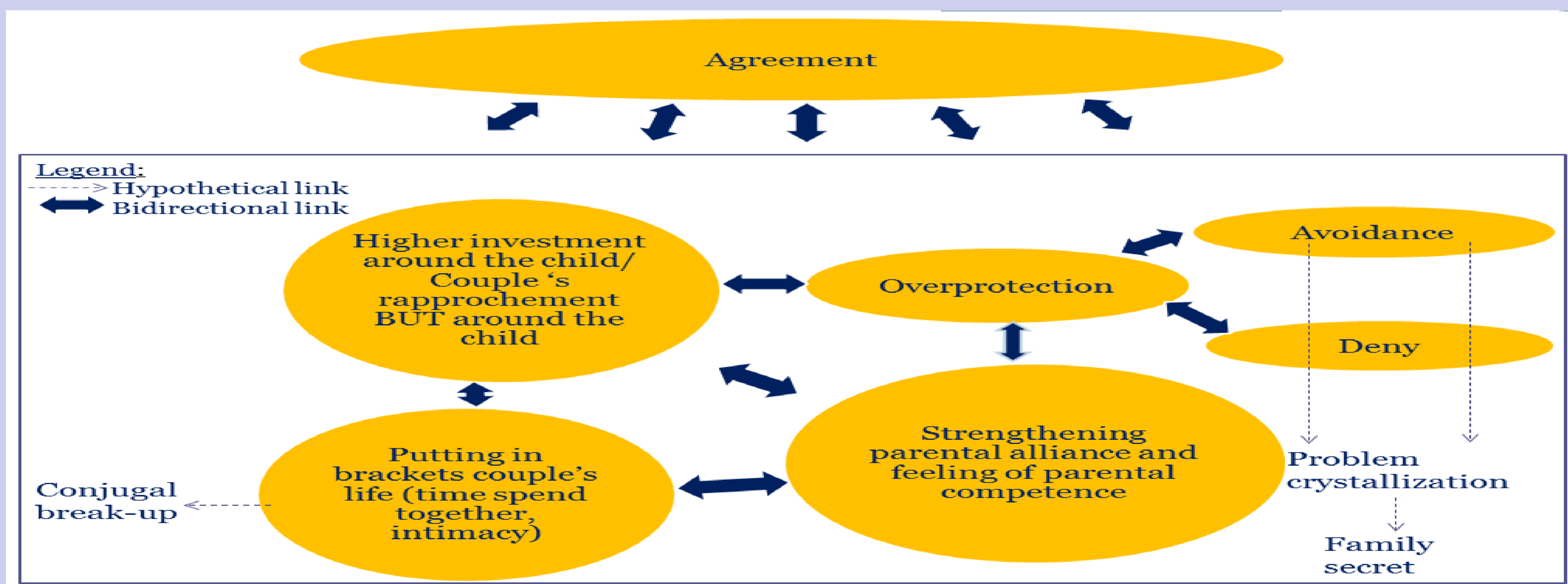
Sample

- 6 couples
- One or more child(ren) sexually assault (extra or intrafamilial, excluding a member of the couple met)

Tools

- Clinical analyses
- Demographic information (abuse circumstances and family characteristics)
- 6 questionnaires (LEDS, DAS, DCI, PAI, QAECEP, SDI)
- Semi-structured interview

Results: modelization of the process experienced by couples after a child disclosure of sexual abuse



Discussion

How to explain this phenomenon ?

- Conjugal break-up?
 - Necessity of a « psychosocial territory » // Minuchin, 1979
- Conjugal satisfaction?
 - Temporary conjugal disappearance → adaptive in short term
 - Standard conjugal satisfaction → resources to face this step
- Focus on the child?
 - Appears as adaptive and reassurance
 - Answers to a desire of reparation after disclosure // Scheeringa and Zeanah, 2001
- Reduction of intimacy?
 - Echo with traumatic child experience → trigger disgust
- Dyadic coping
 - Agreement on the procedure → resource
 - Differences between emotions management → trigger a distance between partners

Conclusions : clinical implication and future researches

- Expression and listening of couples // Myrick and Green, 2013
- Release and restore parenthood // Valentino and al., 2010
- Contain conjugality // Delage, 2000
- Speaking space for every subsystems // Hébert, 2011
 - But being careful to temporality
- Relation before disclosure ?
 - Compare results before and after trauma → ideal but impossible to reach
 - To make up for, evaluations at different times → longitudinal study
- Influence of couples' experience on distress and prognostic of child's evolution