

# Adult Survivors' of CSA Experiences with



# Parent Disclosure Response



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## Future Implications

The findings from this study provide an additional framework to approach post-disclosure parent-child relationships. Some findings can be used as a means to guide parents or therapists towards a deeper understanding of adult CSA survivors' perception of what makes a positive disclosure experience.

In order to investigate the consistency of these findings to different demographics and situations, future studies should aim to increase diversity amongst participants, control for differing familial context, and study personal influences that may impact the data.

## References

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## Acknowledgments

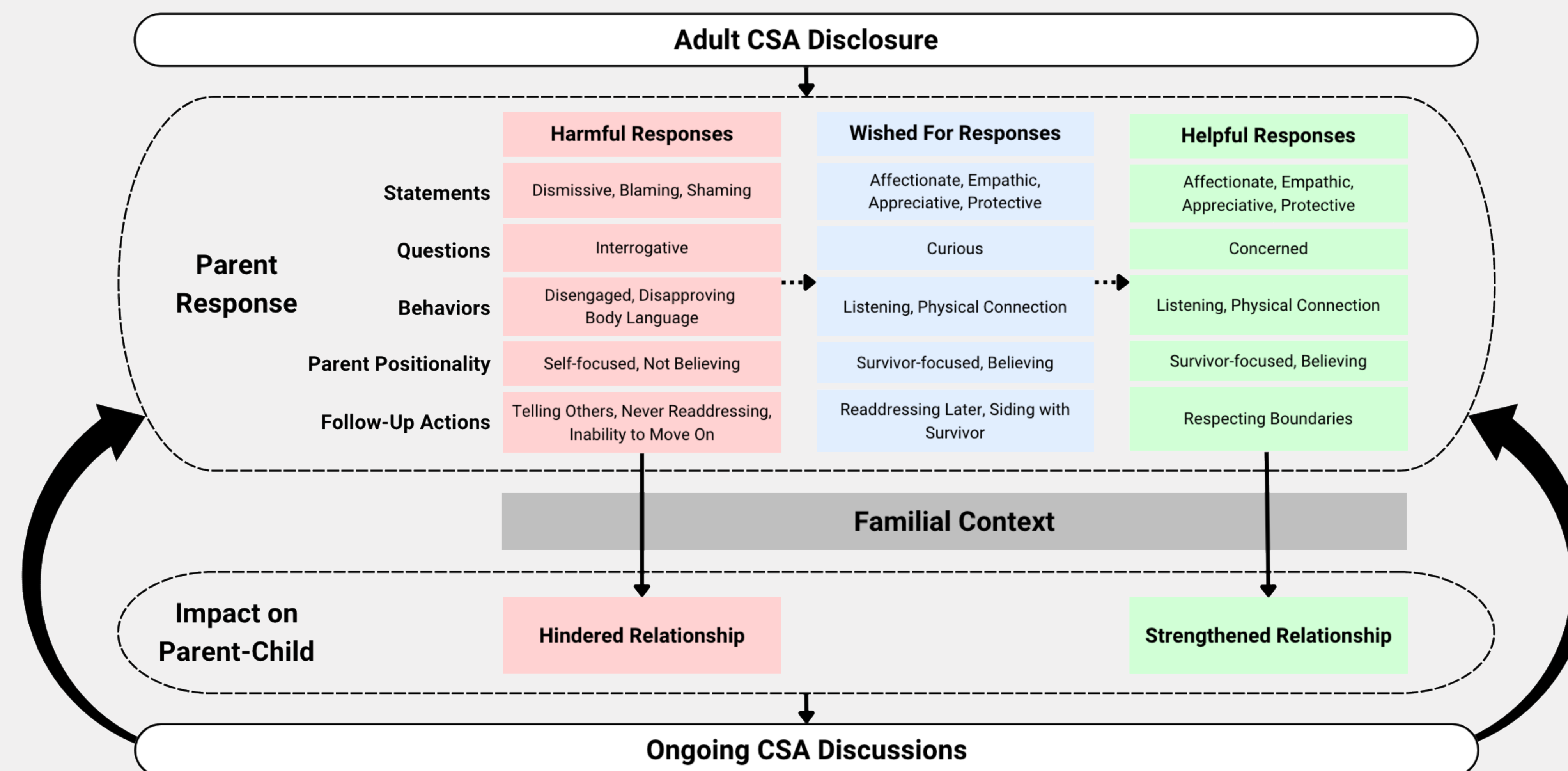
The work we contributed to this project could not have been done without our mentor, Darrian McKiernan and the entire UROP team!

## ABSTRACT

Sexual abuse during childhood is extremely rampant in American societies. While this experience is inherently traumatic, disclosure between victims and their parental figures can invite healing (Karakurt & Silver, 2014). Despite the potential for understanding and acceptance, experiences of sexual abuse disclosure also have the potential to induce harm. The purpose of this study was to qualitatively explore how parents' and parent figure's responses to adult disclosures of Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) impacted the survivors' perception of the disclosure experience and develop a central theory. It further evaluated the ability of parent's responses to either strengthen or hinder the relationship with their child. The study's goal was then to apply these results to a theoretical framework and describe the most helpful ways for parents to respond to their children's disclosures. In-depth semi-structured interviews with fifteen participants revealed specific responses that hindered and strengthened relationships. In developing the theory, five themes emerged: statements, questions, behaviors, positionality, and follow up questions. Additionally, wished for responses, familial context, and ongoing CSA discussions were emphasized. Parents' specific approaches to each of these themes contextualized the impact of the CSA. In future CSA disclosures, parents can apply the in depth theoretical framework developed by this study to inform responses to CSA disclosure.

## Findings

### Hindered vs. Strengthened



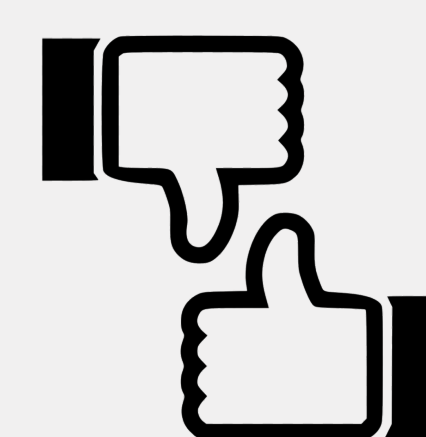
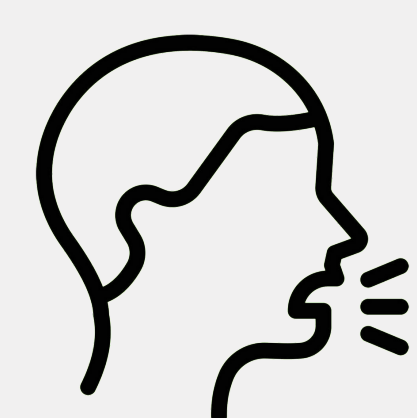
## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Poorly perceived Child Sexual Abuse disclosures can profoundly impact parent-(adult) child relationships
- Disclosure offers opportunity for harm and healing.
- A need to understand survivors perceptions of their disclosure arises.

## METHODOLOGY

- 15 participants indicated they had experienced CSA on an initial questionnaire
- Participated in semi-structured interviews that revealed themes of strengthening and hindering relationships
- After coding was conducted in Dedoose, Central Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006) was used to assist in the development of a theory that described the specific actions which benefited/stunted parent-child relationships

Statements      Questions      Behaviors      Positionality      Follow-up Actions



The above grounded theory diagram breaks down the qualitative data surmised from coding and analysis. The diagram sorts parental responses synonymous with perceived helpful and harmful reactions to disclosure. Also conveyed is the relationship between perceived positive responses and "wished for" responses, or reactions participants hoped their parental figures might have had upon disclosure. Hindered relationships were distinguished by firmer boundaries between parents and children, loss of trust, and feelings of resentment. Strengthened relationships, on the other hand, resulted in heightened communication, stronger physical and emotional bonding, and feelings of security.