

# THE SCHIZOPHRENOGENIC MOTHER, THE NON-CULPABLE MOTHER

## AND THE SWISS PSYCHIATRY *(work in progress)*

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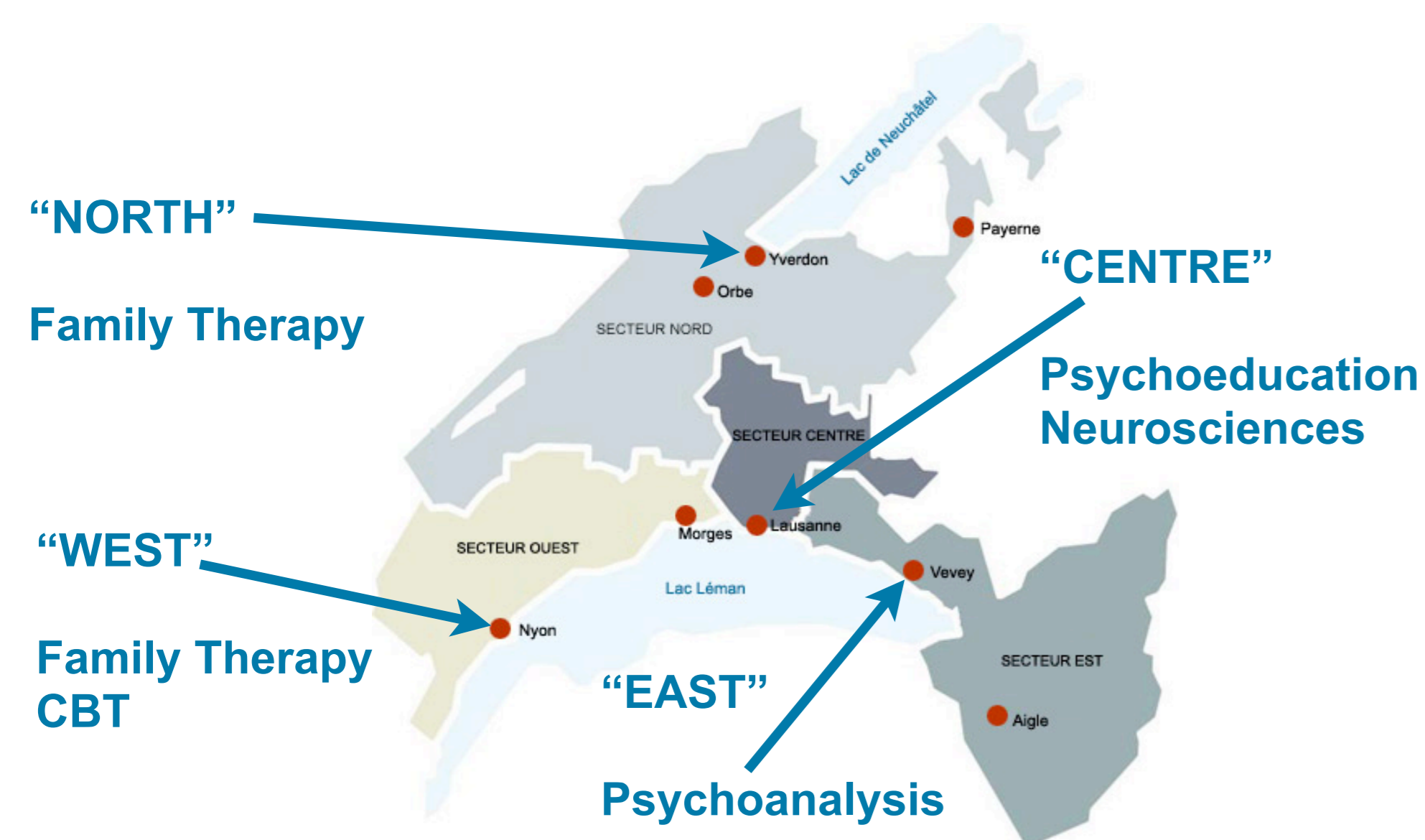
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### GENERAL CONTEXT...

- Traditional tacit agreement between psychiatrists and sociologists throughout the 60's and 70's built on the presumption of a generally derogatory role of the relatives of psychotics with regards to the aetiology of the illness ("blaming the mother" theories) or that they would form malevolent alliances with psychiatric institutions (Cf. Foucault, Goffman)
- The next-of-kin relationship and their discourses have been rarely listened to by psychiatrists and sociologists alike
- A new place in the psychiatric universe and a new legitimacy has been gradually granted to the relatives of psychotics and their discourses beginning with early 90's thanks to the now dominant "blaming the brain" aetiological theories of schizophrenia (Cf. DSM IV and the psychiatric mainstream)

### ...AND THE SWISS EXCEPTION

- In the canton of Vaud, the so called "blaming the mother old psychiatry" has not been replaced by the "blaming the brain new psychiatry" but they coexist nowadays geographically in four psychiatric areas
- They form together a polyphonic universe of expert approaches to mental illness
- The type of treatment the patient is likely to receive is determined by patient's residence:



### OBJECTIVES

- Determine how today's non-culpable mothers of schizophrenia patients construct their *stocks of knowledge* of schizophrenia
- Analyse the mothers' narratives in the light of the polyphony of the expert discourses on schizophrenia that are socially available in the canton of Vaud
- Determine the characteristics of the social mobilisation of the next-of-kin relationship of schizophrenia patients in Switzerland

### METHODS

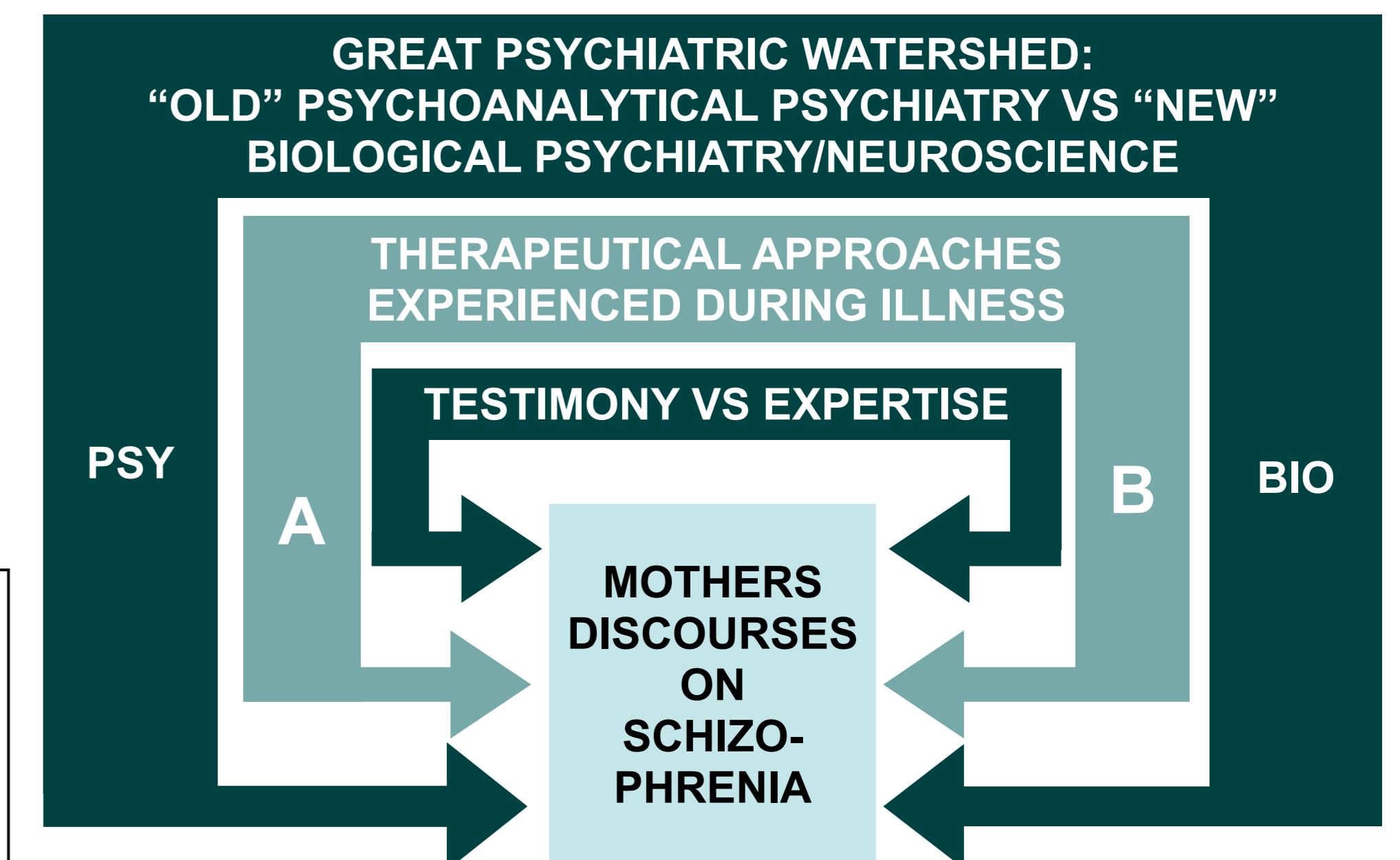
- Participant observation (patient's next-of-kin relationship meetings; psychiatric ward; patient's next-of-kin relationship advocacy group)
- Audio recordings of family dialogues, transcription, analysis

### DATA SAMPLE *(translated from French)*

1 M1 he'd been diagnosed with schizophrenia 15  
 2 years ago but it all started in early  
 3 childhood=anyway (.) so: hum (.) what I  
 4 wanted to say is that thanks to the  
 5 explanations of his his psychologists I  
 6 finally understood that when you are  
 7 schizophrenic >especially my son 'cause as we  
 8 all know there are many kinds of  
 9 schizophrenia and many types of personality  
 10 >etcetera< but as far as he is concerned=and  
 11 (.) it's the same with your children when  
 12 they eat so much it's to fill themselves  
 13 really 'cause they are continuously  
 14 frustrated emotionally socially financially  
 15 and the illness makes them feel so void and  
 16 nothing can satisfy .hhh them so eating calms  
 17 their anxiety=  
 18 M2 =hum [hum  
 19 M1 [so their weight goes up very quickly  
 20 they have just changed my son's  
 21 medication .hhh don't even know the name of  
 22 it but it makes him eat even more...

### CONTRADICTIONS & POLYPHONY

- During their *moral career* the next-of-kin relationship are exposed to an internally divided and contradictory expert psychiatric universe, embodied by different psychiatric institutions
- As a consequence of their exposure to contradictory expert discourses, the patient's mothers become polyphonic enunciators



### PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

- the discourses of the Swiss mothers of schizophrenia patients not only do not challenge expert knowledge, unlike similar movements in USA (NAMI, Cf. McLean), but draw very largely on often contradictory expert discourses in order to produce meaningful explanation of schizophrenia
- mothers consider themselves as legitimate contributors to the scientific knowledge of schizophrenia
- mothers' narratives generally echo the mainstream biological psychiatry's explanation of schizophrenia and support its vision of the positive evolution of the psychiatry towards a "more scientific model"
- it is uncommon among the mothers to look for psychoanalytically oriented professional help for their ill children but it is not uncommon to draw on psychoanalytically inspired explanations in order to narrate the madness

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