Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures

Terri D. Fisher, Clive M. Davis, William L. Yarber, Sandra L. Davis

Family Sex Communication Quotient

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Clay Warren
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12-month follow-up interval, baseline PACS scores were significantly positively associated with frequency of sexual communication (Milhausen et al., 2007) and condom use during the intervening 6 months between the 6-month and 12-month follow-up assessments. Discriminant validity was assessed by correlating the PACS with measures of watching movies or television. These correlations were not significant.

Other Information

The PACS is a brief, self-administered behavioral scale measuring frequency of sexual communication with a parent or parents, suitable for low-literate samples (requiring a fourth grade reading level). Researchers may find the PACS particularly useful in sexual health education interventions, particularly family-level interventions, for assessing frequency of sexual communication pre- and post-intervention to evaluate intervention efficacy. The authors would appreciate receiving information about the results obtained with this measure.

References


### Exhibit

#### Parent–Adolescent Communication Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the past 6 months, how often have you and your parent(s) talked about the following things . . .</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>. . . sex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . how to use condoms</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . protecting yourself from STDs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . protecting yourself from AIDS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. . . protecting yourself from becoming pregnant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Family Sex Communication Quotient

**Clay Warren,† The George Washington University**

The Family Sex Communication Quotient (FSCQ) was developed as a diagnostic tool to measure a general family orientation to discussion about sex between parents and children (Warren & Neer, 1982, 1983). This orientation is assessed across three dimensions: comfort, information, and value. The comfort dimension was chosen as a main FSCQ measure because people positively experience supportive climates regarded as essential to the exchange of sex-related information between parents and children. The information dimension was included because the home can function as a primary source of sexual learning only through sufficient sharing of information. The value dimension was selected because long-range positive values about family sex communication will influence the likelihood of discussing sex with one’s own children.

**Description**

The 18-item FSCQ instrument incorporates six statements for each of three dimensions assessed on a 5-point Likert

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†Address correspondence to Clay Warren, Department of Organizational Sciences and Communication, The George Washington University, 600 21st Street NW, Washington, DC, 20052; e-mail: claywar@gwu.edu
scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The comfort dimension measures the perceived degree of openness with which sex is discussed in the family (e.g., “I feel free to ask my parents questions about sex”). The information dimension measures perception of the amount of information learned and shared during discussions (e.g., “I feel better informed about sex if I talk with my parents”). The value dimension measures the perceived overall importance of the family role in sexual learning (e.g., “The home should be a primary place for learning about sex”).

Descriptive statistics from inception to the present show respondents demonstrating a modest orientation (between 65 and 36) toward family sex communication (Warren, 2006). Basing a strong orientation on a minimum score of 72 that would result if respondents “agree” with all 18 statements, approximately 1 in 10 respondents represent a strong orientation. Range levels of orientation have been generalized as low (18–39), moderate (40–69), and high (70–90).

The FSCQ is appropriate for American and Canadian populations (Warren, 2000). The extent to which families in other developed countries have effective family sex communication is generally not available (Warren, 1992). When the FSCQ was administered to a Danish sample, however, results were distributed differently from those of the U.S. (Warren, 1987).

Response Mode and Timing

Respondents are informed that the FSCQ represents personal feelings about family discussions of sex. They are asked to circle one of five response categories that best describe their opinion: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral (or Don’t Know), D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree. They are advised to answer the questions regardless of whether they have talked about sex with their parents, not to spend much time on any one question, and not to ask others how they are answering their questions. The FSCQ can be completed in 5 minutes or less.

Scoring

Comfort is measured by Items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, and 17, Information by Items 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18, and Value by Items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, and 16. Each SA answer gets a “5,” each A a “4,” each N a “3,” each D a “2,” and each SD a “1.” Six of the items need to be reverse scored (Items 4, 9, 10, 13, 14, and 16). The numbers are totaled and represent the FSCQ score. Three subscores are available by summing the items in each dimension.

Reliability and Validity

Statements were constructed along definitional lines of face validity for inclusion in the FSCQ dimensions. In the early stages of development, four independent measures on frequency, impact, parental style, and attitudes toward sexual practices were employed to serve as criterion-related validity tests for the FSCQ.

The initial statistical assessments of the FSCQ showed it to be a highly reliable instrument (alpha = .92; Warren & Neer, 1986). Across the years, the alpha coefficient has averaged above .90 (Warren, 2006). In a study analyzing parental, in addition to children’s, completion of the FSCQ, the alpha for mothers was .91 (Warren & Olsen, 2005).

Early development work on analysis of the 18 items demonstrated that two-thirds of the items correlated above .60, one-sixth above .40, and one-sixth above .30. Dimension-to-dimension correlations further supported the internal consistency of the FSCQ. All dimensions correlated above .60, with the comfort and information dimensions correlating above .80. Dimension-to-total correlations provided very strong evidence for the internal consistency of the FSCQ with all dimensions correlating above .80, while the value and information dimensions each correlated above .90 with the FSCQ.

The internal structure of the FSCQ was examined with factor analysis, and only two items from the value dimension failed to contribute to the factor structure. (They were not deleted because they did not reduce the alpha estimate of the instrument.) Evidence for the reliability of the orientation levels assigned to the FSCQ summed scores was found in significant univariate F ratios that ranged from 6.85 to 70.80, with one-half of the items producing F ratios above 40.00, while only four items yielded F ratios lower than 20.00. Discriminant analysis resulted in a single discriminant function that correctly classified 87% of respondents within their respective membership category.

A full discussion of reliability and validity measures can be found in Warren (1995) and Warren and Neer (1986). A recent study (Zamboni & Silver, 2009) evaluating properties of the FSCQ as well as Fisher’s Weighted Topics Scale (1987) found the two scales to be significantly and positively correlated with one another, and together to encompass all aspects of measurement that Fisher deemed important in the area of family sex communication (i.e., extent, frequency, quality, and content). Because of the conceptual strengths and good psychometric properties of the scales, the researchers proposed their use to assess family sex communication.

Other Information

The FSCQ was initially copyrighted in the Journal of Applied Communication Research. The instrument can be reprinted for profit with the permission of the journal and author. It can be used, without obtaining permission of the journal or author, for noncommercial purposes. Michael Neer contributed to designing the instrument.

References


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**Exhibit**

*Family Sex Communication Quotient*

**Directions:** The following statements represent personal feelings about family discussions of sex. Please circle one of the five response categories that best describes your opinion: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral (or Don’t Know), D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree. Also, please answer these questions regardless of whether you have ever talked about sex with your parents. Don’t spend much time on any one question; make a choice and move to the next. Don’t ask others how they are answering their questions, or how they think you should answer yours.

1. Sex should be one of the most important topics for parents and children to discuss.  
2. I can talk to my parents about almost anything related to sex.  
3. My parents know what I think about sex.  
4. It is not necessary to talk to my parents about sex.  
5. I can talk openly and honestly with my parents about sex.  
6. I know what my parents think about sex.  
7. The home should be a primary place for learning about sex.  
8. I feel comfortable discussing sex with my parents.  
9. My parents have given me very little information about sex.  
10. Sex is too personal a topic to discuss with my parents.  
11. My parents feel comfortable discussing sex with me.  
12. Much of what I know about sex has come from family discussions.  
13. Sex should not be discussed in the family unless there is a problem to resolve.  
14. Sex is too hard a topic to discuss with my parents.  
15. I feel better informed about sex if I talk to my parents.  
16. The least important thing to discuss with my parents is sex.  
17. I feel free to ask my parents questions about sex.  
18. When I want to know something about sex, I generally ask my parents.

**Scoring:** The FSCQ measures a general orientation toward discussion about sex in the family unit along three dimensions: Comfort (Items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, and 17), Information (Items 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18), and Value (Items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, and 16). You can give each SA answer a “5,” A answer a “4,” N answer a “3,” D answer a “2,” and SD answer a “1.” Six of the questions need to be reverse scored (Items 4, 9, 10, 13, 14, and 16). Reverse scoring means the 5 and 1 weights are interchanged, the 4 and 2 weights are interchanged, and the 3 remains the same. It is used in questionnaire design to detect set-response behavior—a tendency of some folks to not think about the questions and, thus, to use the same answers regardless of the question asked. After pairing a number with the 18 questions, you can total the numbers for your FSCQ score. Range levels of orientation have been generalized as low (18–39), moderate (40–69), and high (70–90).