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Unwanted Childhood Sexual Experiences Questionnaire

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The Unwanted Childhood Sexual Experience Questionnaire can be used to document the age and extent of respondents’ unwanted childhood sexual experiences with adults. Instructions intentionally refer to unwanted childhood sexual experiences rather than abusive sexual experiences or experiences of sexual victimization in an attempt to avoid unintended bias in reporting. It defines an adult as someone who is at least 5 years older than the respondent.

**Description**

Each of the 13 items refers to a different set of behaviors that can be categorized as minimal contact (Items 1–3), moderate contact (Items 4–8), or maximal contact (Items 9–13). Items were drawn from a larger questionnaire designed by Finkelhor (1979) and have been used in other studies (e.g., Fromuth, 1986; Stevenson & Gajarsky, 1992).

**Response Mode and Timing**

Respondents simply indicate in the space provided the age or ages at which any of the unwanted sexual behaviors occurred. The scale can be completed in less than 5 minutes.

**Scoring**

The questionnaire allows for the reporting of the frequency with which each of the behaviors occur in the sample, and the ages at which the behaviors occurred.

**Reliability**

The intention of this questionnaire is to document whether specific unwanted behaviors have occurred, and the items are not intended to constitute a scale. Reliability has not been assessed directly.

**Validity**

Using this measure, Stevenson and Gajarsky’s (1992) sample of college students reported frequencies of unwanted sexual experiences that were consistent with earlier reports (e.g., Finkelhor, 1979, 1984; Groth, 1979). Although the percentage of men reporting unwanted sexual experiences was somewhat higher than some previous estimates, it was quite consistent with others (e.g., Popen & Segal, 1988).

**References**


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**Unwanted Childhood Sexual Experiences Questionnaire**

It is now generally realized that most people have sexual experiences as children and while growing up. By “sexual” it is meant any behavior or event that might seem “sexual” to you. Please try to remember the unwanted, that is, sexual experiences that were forced on you or done against your will by an adult (someone at least five or more years older than you), while growing up. Indicate if you had any of the following experiences before the age of 16.

1. An invitation or request to do something sexual.  
2. Kissing and hugging in a sexual way.  
3. An adult showing his/her sex organs to you.  
4. You showing your sex organs to an adult.  
5. An adult fondling you in a sexual way.

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SEXUAL HISTORY AND ADJUSTMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

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This measure was developed to assess participants’ retrospective reports of (a) frequency of sleeping in the bed with parents between the ages of 0–5 and 6–11 years; (b) frequency of seeing parents, as well as others, naked between 0–5 years and 6–11 years; (c) parental attitudes toward sexuality; (d) participants’ level of comfort in discussing sexuality with parents; and (e) perceptions of parental discomfort regarding sexuality. Information on current adjustment and sexual behavior was also obtained.

Description

This instrument would be appropriate for populations of older adolescents and adults. Items 1–10 assess retrospective reports of childhood experiences with nudity and sleeping in the parental bed. Items 11–19 assess the participant’s perceptions of parental attitudes toward sex and discussion of sexuality, as well as how often there was demonstration of physical affection in the family. Items 20–29 assess the participant’s current sexual behavior and attitudes toward himself or herself. Item 30 addresses feelings of discomfort about the physical contact and affection displayed in one’s family.

Response Mode, Timing, and Scoring

Respondents are asked to indicate their response to each item by circling the number that best reflects their answer to a question using a 5-point Likert-type scale. The anchors of the scale vary by section. Investigators may be interested in individual responses, such as frequency of seeing one particular parent naked, and may wish to sum responses across ages (e.g., index for maternal nudity would be sum of response for nudity at ages 0–5 plus nudity at ages 6–11). Or investigators may wish to sum for a total parental nudity index (cf. Lewis & Janda, 1988) by summing all responses for mother and father across ages.

A similar approach is used with the items about parental attitudes. Investigators may combine items for maternal attitudes (e.g., comfort discussing sexual matters; positive vs. negative attitude), as well as similar items for paternal attitudes. Alternatively, a global measure of attitudes may be generated. In our previous research (Lewis & Janda, 1988), however, we found some differences in maternal and paternal attitudes. Thus, investigators are urged to be cautious in this regard.

In our previous research (Lewis & Janda, 1988), we examined the sexual adjustment items separately. Interested investigators might wish to combine items to generate a more global measure of adjustment.

Reliability

A number of subscales for this measure can be constructed, depending on researchers’ interests. Internal consistency was demonstrated for the following subscales using coefficient alpha:

1. Parental Nudity Subscale (Sum Items 1, 2, 3, 4): .74
2. Overall Nudity Subscale (Sum Items 1–8): .77
3. Parental Bed Subscale (Sum Items 9–10): .80
4. Maternal Attitudes Subscale (Sum Items 11, 13, 15): .77
5. Paternal Attitudes Subscale (Sum Items 12, 14, 16): .78
6. Overall Attitudes Subscale (Sum Items 11–16): .78

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