



# The Complex Trauma Questionnaire (ComplexTQ): development and preliminary psychometric properties of an instrument for measuring early relational trauma

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### Specialty section:

This article was submitted to  
Psychopathology,  
a section of the journal  
Frontiers in Psychology

Received: 20 April 2015

Accepted: 18 August 2015

Published: 01 September 2015

### Citation:

Maggiora Vergano C, Lauriola M and  
Speranza AM (2015) The Complex  
Trauma Questionnaire (ComplexTQ):  
development and preliminary  
psychometric properties of an  
instrument for measuring early  
relational trauma.  
*Front. Psychol.* 6:1323.  
doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01323

Research on the etiology of adult psychopathology and its relationship with childhood trauma has focused primarily on specific forms of maltreatment. This study developed an instrument for the assessment of childhood and adolescence trauma that would aid in identifying the role of co-occurring childhood stressors and chronic adverse conditions. The Complex Trauma Questionnaire (ComplexTQ), in both clinician and self-report versions, is a measure for the assessment of multi-type maltreatment: physical, psychological, and sexual abuse; physical and emotional neglect as well as other traumatic experiences, such rejection, role reversal, witnessing domestic violence, separations, and losses. The four-point Likert scale allows to specifically indicate with which caregiver the traumatic experience has occurred. A total of 229 participants, a sample of 79 nonclinical and that of 150 high-risk and clinical participants, were assessed with the ComplexTQ clinician version applied to Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) transcripts. Initial analyses indicate acceptable inter-rater reliability. A good fit to a 6-factor model regarding the experience with the mother and to a 5-factor model with the experience with the father was obtained; the internal consistency of factors derived was good. Convergent validity was provided with the AAI scales. ComplexTQ factors discriminated normative from high-risk and clinical samples. The findings suggest a promising, reliable, and valid measurement of early relational trauma that is reported; furthermore, it is easy to complete and is useful for both research and clinical practice.

**Keywords:** Complex Trauma Questionnaire, relational trauma, attachment, assessment, psychometric properties

## Introduction

Over the past two decades, evidence regarding the harmful impact of early maltreatment has accumulated significantly. Two-thirds of adolescents and adults report having suffered from child relational trauma, which represents a root cause of major public health issues (Copeland et al., 2007; van der Kolk and d'Andrea, 2010). Previous research has primarily focused on single types of maltreatment sequelae; however, most maltreated children experience more than one form of abuse and neglect (Kessler, 2000; Spinazzola et al., 2005; Pynoos et al., 2008). Indeed, in literature on child

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