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## Extended essay cover

Candidates must complete this page and then give this cover and their final version of the extended essay to their supervisor.

Candidate session number

Candidate name

School name

Examination session (May or November)

May

Year

2015

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered:

Psychology

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay:

How does Childhood Sexual Abuse affect Social Interactions in Adulthood (ages 30-40)?

### Candidate's declaration

*This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.*

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 02/23/2015

While preparing her extended essay, \_\_\_\_\_ faced a few challenges that she was able to overcome with her hard work and determination. Deciding on the research question took some time and consideration, before she was able to commit to a particular topic. Initially, \_\_\_\_\_ considered researching the affects of *alcohol and drug abuse*. After some research, she discovered that there was a trend of victims of sexual abuse that later in life turned to drugs and alcohol to cope with their trauma. Once she determined that her topic was addressing the affects of *childhood sexual abuse*, \_\_\_\_\_ found that there was a limited number of case studies to choose from, likely because many victims are uncomfortable talking about these traumatic events. After some extensive research, she was able to find a case study to use for her paper. Overall, \_\_\_\_\_ stated that while it took a lot of time and effort, she enjoyed the process, and learned more than she expected about her topic, as well as the research process. ✓

*This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a mark of zero will be issued.*

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

*As per the section entitled "Responsibilities of the Supervisor" in the EE guide, the recommended number of hours spent with candidates is between 3 and 5 hours. Schools will be contacted when the number of hours is left blank, or where 0 hours are stated and there lacks an explanation. Schools will also be contacted in the event that number of hours spent is significantly excessive compared to the recommendation.*

I spent  hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 3/2/15

**Assessment form (for examiner use only)**

Candidate session number		
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**Achievement level**

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	1	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
B introduction	1	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
C investigation	3	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
D knowledge and understanding	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
E reasoned argument	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
F analysis and evaluation	1	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
G use of subject language	3	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
H conclusion	1	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
I formal presentation	1	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
J abstract	1	2	<input type="text"/>	2	<input type="text"/>
K holistic judgment	2	4	<input type="text"/>	4	<input type="text"/>
Total out of 36	18		<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>

Name of examiner 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (CAPITAL letters)

Name of examiner 3: \_\_\_\_\_ Examiner number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (CAPITAL letters)

IB Assessment Centre use only: B: \_\_\_\_\_

IB Assessment Centre use only: A: \_\_\_\_\_

How does Childhood Sexual Abuse affect Social Interactions in Adulthood (ages 30-40)?

21 February 2015

Word Count: 4000✓

MAY 2015

## Abstract

The purpose of this investigation is to determine the degree to which childhood sexual abuse affects social interactions in adulthood, when the victims reach the ages of 30-40. Sexual abuse can be defined as any sexual act with a child performed by an adult or an older child.<sup>1</sup> The known effects of childhood sexual abuse are rooted in the mental stress and immediate consequences, which can include pregnancy or STD's. The purpose of this paper is to go deeper into the effects and observe how a traumatic event such as sexual abuse can really change the way the victims act and the way they interact later in their lives. This will be examined through the use of *Child Sexual Exploitation: A Comprehensive Review of Pornography, Prostitution, and Internet Crimes* by MD Sharon W. Cooper and others, as well as the use of Robert T. Ammerman (MCP) and many others' *Handbook of Child Abuse Research and Treatment*. A specific case study has been read and analyzed, and by extensive research, a conclusion has been drawn as to how sexual abuse as a child affects its victims later in life, as well as the treatments that are offered and how effective those come to be. When an individual, a child, has been sexually assaulted, their lives can never be the same. Through the research, it can be concluded that even when someone who has been assaulted has grown up, the scars remain and they will always feel as if they are not good enough to live the life that other people can.

\* Use past tense. All research should be completed before the abstract is written.

<sup>1</sup> "Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse." *Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse* | RAINN | Rape, Abuse and Incest National

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## Introduction

Regarded as one of the worst experiences to face as a child, sexual abuse stands as a very taboo subject, and is a traumatic experience that many children, unfortunately, are forced to face.

There is no way to trace the origin of when sexual abuse first started, but it is now possible to uncover the true mental, physical, and emotional trauma the victims face, not only when they experience it, but as they grow up. There has been much more attention given to the topic of childhood sexual abuse (CSA)<sup>2</sup>, however, despite the attention, the victimization of the children has not declined. CSA has been the focus of considerable attention among researchers, clinicians, the courts, and definitely among the news media. These cases go through much assessment and the victims go through multiple treatment techniques, but many of the professionals have been challenged to demonstrate the effectiveness of their work. Case studies and research have been conducted, and those have shown much more information as to the effectiveness of the treatments and have given more insight into the mind and thought-processes of the victims. Safer Society has come up with a guidebook to childhood sexual abuse; it discusses who is more likely to sexually abuse a child, what some of the behavioural symptoms are, and how it can be prevented<sup>3</sup>. They also talk about how "in as many as 90% of child sexual abuse cases, the child knows and trusts the person who sexually abuses them."<sup>4</sup> It is very common that when a child get sexually abused, that the perpetrator is actually a close family friend or figure, and when the child is abused, they usually do not talk about it because

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<sup>2</sup> "Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse." *Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse | RAINN | Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network*. RAINN. Web. 07 Sept. 2014.

<sup>3</sup> "Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse." *Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse | RAINN | Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network*. RAINN. Web. 07 Sept. 2014.

<sup>4</sup> "Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse." *Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse | RAINN | Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network*. RAINN. Web. 07 Sept. 2014.

the adult convinces them that it was "okay" and that everything will be alright. Yet these children are vulnerable, and have been taken advantage of. ✓

### The Psychology behind Sexual Abuse.

The following case study was performed by Sharon W. Cooper<sup>5</sup> ✓ Gloria was once innocent. She was once a child with a future. A child who could grow up to be something more than just another victim. ✓ All of that was ripped from her very hands when her father decided that he could rape her; she was only 8. Her mother had just moved out, and like many adults, her father resorted to alcohol. He kept soft-core pornographic magazines, and after her mother left them, he would get drunk a few times a week, look at the magazines, and rape her. This was an ongoing situation, and like every other kid, she kept to herself and didn't tell a soul about what her father was doing; she even tried to convince herself that it was her fault. Her father, when caught, said that she dressed "slutty" and that is why he chose to rape her. The rapes were consistent until she turned 13, which is when she took money out of her father's wallet and skipped town. She ran to a small town about 100 miles away from her home, where she met Fran, who gave her a place to stay and advice, etc... Fran had a plan to help Gloria make some money; be sexual with some of Fran's friends. When it first started everything was pretty simple, masturbation and oral sex, but by the third night she was having ✓ full on intercourse with

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<sup>5</sup> ✓ Cooper, Sharon W., MD. "Adult Survivors of the Child Sexual Exploitation Industry: Psychological Profiles." *Medical, Legal, & Social Science Aspects of Child Sexual Exploitation*. Vol. One. STM Learning, 2005. 155-87. Print --- Page 200-205



these friends, and later that week she was walking the streets looking for men to have sex with.

How old was she? Four months shy of her 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. ✓

What is to come of something like this? There are many psychological aftermaths that an

individual may experience after being sexually abused. Sometimes the individuals may be

depressed, resort to substance abuse, self-harm, eating disorders, and suicide, even post-

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), etc... After and individual experiences something traumatic,

no matter what it may be, it is normal for them to experience kinds of anxiety, fear, stress, and

having difficulty coping and dealing. ✓ As classified by the National Institute of Mental Health,

symptoms of PTSD can be grouped into three main categories: Re-Experiencing, Avoidance, and

Hyper-Arousal. Re-experiencing is a repeated reliving of the event, ✓ and it tends to interfere with

daily activities. This particular category includes frightening thoughts, flashbacks, recurrent

memories or dreams, and even physical reactions to the situations that remind the individual of

the event. Avoidance's symptoms stem more from the desire of an individual to change their

routine to escape situations that may seem similar to the trauma. ✓ These particular people may

avoid places, objects, or events that remind them of the experience. There are many emotions

that are involved in this category, or more so, lack thereof. Some victims may experience

numbness, guilt, depression; and some even lose the ability to feel a particular emotion, most

of the time this is happiness and content. ✓ Hyper-Arousal is the third category and all of its

symptoms are psychological. The symptoms include difficulty when trying to concentrate or

falling asleep. These symptoms usually cause an individual to be very "on edge" and jumpy. All

of these different types of symptoms of PTSD can make it very difficult for a victim to continue

with their daily routine. For children, the symptoms of PTSD are a little different, according to

*Avoid such questions in a formal essay. No definite expression is preferred.*

the National Institute of Mental Health: Bedwetting, inability to talk, acting out the assault during playtime, and being unusually clingy with a parent or trusted adult. ✓

PTSD<sup>6</sup> is very common in individuals who have experienced something very traumatic, however there are also other smaller psychological changes in a child who has been through sexual abuse. They can be fearful, feel helpless and powerless, isolate themselves, and feel betrayed, angry, and sad. One of the worst possible feelings that a child usually has when they are sexually abused is that it is their responsibility. The offender often will make the child feel responsible for keeping the abuse silent, for keeping their mouths shut. The child may also feel the burden of trying to keep the family together, and may not say anything in order to not cause issues. The burden of feeling this way in general for a child will make it almost impossible for them to be able to live a "regular" childhood. ✓

Children who are victims of sexual assault may experience what is known as Stockholm syndrome. This was developed originally to explain the phenomenon of hostages that were bonding with the captors. The name Stockholm comes from a bank hold up that had occurred in Stockholm, Sweden in 1973 when there were four hostages who were held hostage by two men for a total of six days. All the hostages and even the captors managed to form a bond, and the hostages even tried to protect their captors from the police, which included coming to visit

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<sup>6</sup> PTSD is an anxiety disorder that some people get after seeing or living through a dangerous event. When in danger, it's natural to feel afraid. This fear triggers many split-second changes in the body to prepare to defend against the danger or to avoid it. This "fight-or-flight" response is a healthy reaction meant to protect a person from harm. But in PTSD, this reaction is changed or damaged. People who have PTSD may feel stressed or frightened even when they're no longer in danger. ✓

them. One of the hostages was even reported as being engaged to one of the captors. Research that had been conducted later found that in all "hostage" situations, there was some sort of bond that had been formed. This even happens in cult members, battered women, incest victims, and physically and emotionally abused children. There seems to be some kind of extreme phenomenon that may actually be helping in the survival of hostages in that kind of situation. Though Stockholm syndrome does not seem to have a set definition, there are three different "symptoms" that are said to be present in an individual with Stockholm's; these include: positive feelings by the captive towards his/her captor, negative feelings by the captive toward the police or authorities trying to win his/her release, and even positive feelings by the captor towards his/her captive. In cases of child sexual abuse, it is very common that the child would become more attached to the adult that has been hurting them, and this can come from the feeling of responsibility that the child may feel after the incident(s).

The psychological effects of a traumatic event such as childhood sexual assault, if not treated immediately may end up expanding into something much more severe, and becomes long term problems that the individual will have to deal with as they grow older. Looking back at Gloria; she is now 36 years old and continues to feel the same guilt and shame that she had felt during the sexual abuse. She has feelings of defectiveness, vulnerability, and powerlessness, but she tries very hard to cover it all up with a tough exterior, which could also be very damaging to her psychological health. It is hard for someone to try and bury something traumatic, because one day, something could happen that makes them remember the event, and everything could just begin to crumble afterwards. Gloria often uses her tone of voice and her facial expressions to try and send these daggers of contempt at individuals she meets, and uses this as her own form

of protection. It is evident that she has a lot of long-term psychological harm and this could be because she did not seek help where help was due, rather she made the entire situation worse by carrying out sexual acts, which is what she had grown up with. There are times when Gloria threatens to physically hurt people, usually men. She says that she has the same mistrust and hatred of men that would be felt by anyone else who grew up abused and afraid. Gloria claims that there are many times where she actually has hatred for women and children alike. She says that she missed out on the opportunity to learn how to feel love and how to learn to love because she missed her childhood, and there was no one around to help pull her out of the distress that she was in. ✓

#### The Possible Treatments for Those Affected by Sexual Abuse

There are many victims of childhood sexual abuse who refuse to seek help either because they feel responsible, or because they feel so betrayed that it seems as though there would be absolutely no body to turn to in their time of need. ✓ However, those who do seek help, usually are a little better with the coping and social interactions that they are forced to experience as they grow up. Treatments for PTSD for example are very common and can be very helpful, especially in sexual abuse situations. ✓ The treatments do vary for both adults and kids, however overall, they provide an excellent safe place for the individual and could very well save a life; if not physically, then mentally. The National Institute for Mental Health<sup>7</sup> has collaborated with experts from the Mayo Clinic and they have come up with various treatments for victims that have suffered from PTSD in sexual abuse cases; there is cognitive therapy, cognitive behavior ✓

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therapy, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), exposure therapy, medications, and support groups<sup>8</sup>. When they talk about cognitive therapy, they are talking about a form of "talk therapy." This can help the patients to identify and change some of the self-destructive thought patterns that they may have possessed after such a traumatic experience. CBT, or cognitive behavior therapy combines both cognitive and behavioral therapy to assist the patients in identifying the unhealthy thoughts, and replacing them with more positive outlooks and ideas. EMDR combines exposure therapy with a good series of specific eye movement that helps the patients to process the sexual abuse experience<sup>9</sup>. Exposure therapy is not as common in the healing process of sexual assault cases, especially for children, however it is an option. This requires the patient to face the experience head on, but slowly and in increments. As they become more and more familiar with the entire situation, they will usually be able to process the experience better and easier. Medications are usually given to those who are unwilling to cooperate in the therapy sessions, and are given to the patient to help them sleep, get rid of anxiety, and even to help them concentrate<sup>10</sup>. Support groups may seem like an inefficient way of dealing with such an experience, however it is found helpful for those who have suffered from sexual abuse. It is helpful for the victim to sit down and talk

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<sup>8</sup> "Effects of Sexual Assault | RAINN | Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network." *Effects of Sexual Assault | RAINN | Rape,*

*Abuse and Incest National Network.* RAINN. Web. 07 Sept. 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Haskell, Lori. *Research on the Effects of Child Sexual Abuse: A Feminist Critique.* Toronto, Ont.: Centre for Women's Studies in Education, 1986. Print.

<sup>10</sup> "Sexual Abuse." *Http://www.apa.org.* American Psychological Association, 2014. Web. 07 Sept. 2014.

about what has happened, and be able to really connect with another person on such a level that not many could understand. ✓

Each childhood sexual assault case is different, however, if Stockholm syndrome presents itself, there are still some forms of treatment for it, though it may be difficult. When a child has presented his or herself in such a way that shows Stockholm syndrome, it is important to not pressure the victim. There is probably a possibility that the offender has created such a situation where the victim sees the other family members as the “bad guys” so to speak, and if there is any kind of pressure coming from other members, the child will only come to believe the point that the offender was trying to make. Usually in sexual assault cases, the child will not come out and say that he or she is being assaulted in any way, so it is important that the adults in the child’s life stay alert and look for the symptoms. ✓

There is a flaw in the system of any kind of treatment, and that is that usually it is too late by the time the victim seeks help. Gloria, for example, sought therapeutic treatment, but this was a good 20-30 years later; after she had already put up a wall and after she had already let this traumatic experience settle under her skin to recreate herself as a person, affecting not only her mindset, but her social interactions with others that she comes in contact with along the way. ✓ Most victims come in seeking help as adults as “walking victims,” and sometimes the experiences they have lived through have become a part of their childhood pasts and in some cases, the sexual exploitation from their childhood has already spilled over into their adult present. Many of the victims do not even think of the experience as trauma when they first begin therapy, because usually they have already numbed themselves to the idea and have painted over this ugly picture with something they think will protect them: ✓ something they

think is right. The effects of trauma on adult survivors of childhood sexual exploitation comprises three elements; the beliefs the child learned at the time, the behaviours they developed to cope with those beliefs, and the life skills they did not learn, such as in Gloria's case, with the lack of compassion that she can show towards almost any being. These victims are burned, seared in, by the fire of the emotion that was present at the time. The hearts that they would have had one day were completely branded with these meanings of the events. Many of the victims try very hard to construct an adult life, but it is very difficult when all they have are open wounds and missing pieces.

#### The Way Victims Learn to think and who they become.

The child that has been victimized by any kind of sexual harassment or exploitation is just like any other child. All they want to think is that they can be loved, that they are worthy of love, that they deserve self-respect. When a child comes to feel completely worthless, they want to figure out the ways that are possible to raise the self-esteem that has deteriorated. The messages that have been sent to the child end up being the complete opposite of what should be sent to them in times of need. The victim leaves these incidents thinking that there is absolutely no way that they can be loved, no way they are worthy of love, and no way that they will ever be anything more than a victim. "My only worth to others is in sexually servicing them and meeting their sexual needs. My needs are unimportant. I can only get love and attention through sex" (Gloria – age 34)<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> "Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse." *Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse | RAINN | Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network*. RAINN. Web. 07 Sept. 2014.

One of the most frequent beliefs of a sexually abused child is the idea of self-blame. They think that they must have caused the abuse. The offender sometimes directly injects this belief into the child's mind, "Look at what you made me do, my father would say..." (Gloria)<sup>12</sup>. This becomes a kind of denial that makes the child feel as if all of this was their fault.

The adult survivor may still have <sup>retained</sup> some of these beliefs, ~~swimming around in their brains~~. The long-term effects of childhood sexual abuse can be completely life destroying; it can affect their relationships with others (whether intimate or not), self-esteem, or even their work life. Sometimes the victims, feeling as if sex is their comfort, become so encircled in a life that revolves around sex and giving others sex because that's all they have learned in their lives. There may be times when the adult will feel completely depressed<sup>13</sup>, even years after the experience, and therefore it may become very hard for the individual to function normally some days. Emotions may be mixed and jumbled into something that victim does not even understand sometimes. Social interactions are usually avoided; things that would normally give an adult some kind of pleasure do not apply to these situations. This belief of guilt or shame can completely control a victim's life, attitude, and interaction with others along the way.

These different beliefs can come to a point where there is almost no way for the victim to escape. Even in adulthood the victim could potentially self-harm, and in some situations, they can even develop an eating disorder. The depression becomes too strong some days and can cause them to either eat too much or too little. As for friendships and other kinds of

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<sup>12</sup> ✓ Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse." *Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse | RAINN | Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network*. RAINN. Web. 07 Sept. 2014.

<sup>13</sup> ✓ Sexual Abuse." *Http://www.apa.org*. American Psychological Association, 2014. Web. 07 Sept. 2014.



relationships, the victims (being girls) tend to get involved only with men who are antisocial, and may even become involved with men who exert “pimp-like” behaviour. The men that these women turn to are usually just as abusive in the sense that they will offer this woman love and affection, then withdraw it, causing her to come back begging for more, since the scar from her childhood still lingers. The victims of sexual abuse as a child really are unable to become the people that they had the potential to be, and this is usually a sub-result from not being able to interact as well as they would have if something like this had not have happened. When individuals grow up after being victimized, it is expected that the way that they interact socially will be skewed. When they are required to carry a feeling of shame and feelings of sadness and depression, it can become difficult to walk around as if nothing had happened. It is important to note that some people may also become so secluded that they refuse to interact with other human beings in general, staying indoors, and rarely talking to a counselor, which creates this sense of isolation that isn’t healthy if they’re looking to heal. Something as traumatic as this, especially when done by someone that the victim was close to, can really mess up the paths that they take and can alter the mindset that they had originally come into life with.

### Conclusion

Drawing from all of the given information, it is evident that childhood sexual abuse greatly affects the social interactions of the victims in adulthood. They are scarred and as a consequence, have to deal with the pain and suffering of all the “side effects”, so to speak, of such a traumatic experience. It is still unanswered as to how bad the victims are actually affected, because every case is completely different, so trying to come up with a standard

would not be accurate and would not be meticulous. It is possible that there are some individuals who are not as affected by such an experience, however can be assumed that when someone experiences something that's traumatic, they will not just throw it over their shoulders and carry it around proud. They will more than likely try to suppress it and hide the pain, such as what was seen with the case of Gloria. Gloria was able to see both sides of the healing process in order to improve her social interactions as she grew up. Even though she began therapy very late, she still began, and stopped suppressing this anger and stopped acting out in ways that could be harmful to her relationships and other events. When a child is hurt in such a way like sexual abuse, it changes them entirely and destroys who they are, who they become, and how they act around other people when they are grown up. They may think that the event is over and done with, however it may still haunt them in the backs of their minds, making it difficult to interact, and ruining any future relationships they might wish to have.

*Several good points have been identified. Most of the sensitive issues that consequently arose have been dealt with a sensitive & cautious manner.*

## Works Cited

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