



# Mental representation of observable attributes in people with social phobia

Ronald M. Rapee\*, Maree J. Abbott

*Department of Psychology, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109, Australia*

Received 9 September 2004; received in revised form 9 September 2004; accepted 19 January 2005

---

## Abstract

Cognitive models of social phobia stress the importance of a negatively biased mental representation of one's social performance and appearance in maintenance of the disorder. People with social phobia ( $N = 57$ ) and non-clinical controls ( $N = 41$ ) engaged in a public speech and also completed several measures of perceived attributes including speech performance, physical attractiveness, and personal performance ability in several interpersonal areas. Independent observers also rated participants' speech performance and physical attractiveness. Relative to observers' ratings, individuals with social phobia reported significantly lower quality of speech performance and physical attractiveness than did non-clinical individuals. People with social phobia also reported significantly lower perceived ability in other areas of performance and appearance. These data held even after statistically controlling for levels of depression.

© 2005 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Social phobia; Social skills; Attractiveness; Perception

---

## 1. Introduction

Cognitive models of social anxiety stress the importance of distorted perceptions and cognitive processes in the maintenance of the disorder (Clark & Wells, 1995;

---

\*Corresponding author. Tel.: +61 2 9850 8032. fax: +61 2 9850 8062.

E-mail address: [ron.rapee@mq.edu.au](mailto:ron.rapee@mq.edu.au) (R.M. Rapee).

Rapee & Heimberg, 1997; Schlenker & Leary, 1982). More specifically, two of the more recent models of the maintenance of social anxiety suggest that socially anxious individuals hold a mental representation of the self that is biased toward the negative (Clark & Wells, 1995; Rapee & Heimberg, 1997). Individuals high in social anxiety are said to hold negative views of their own abilities, performance and appearance. In turn, these negative perceptions of the self increase expectations of negative evaluation from others and thereby increase anxiety.

Thus, the existence of a negative mental representation in social phobia is a core and central feature of the disorder. As such, greater understanding of the extent and parameters of this perspective should lead to increased understanding of the maintenance of the disorder.

In line with predictions, several studies have shown that individuals with social phobia underestimate their social performance relative to judgements made by independent raters. For example, Rapee and Lim (1992) have shown that individuals with social phobia rated their own speech performance lower than it was rated by others and this discrepancy was found to be significantly greater than that shown by low anxious individuals. Similar results have been shown by other researchers (Alden & Wallace, 1995; Halford & Foddy, 1982; Stopa & Clark, 1993). A similar effect has been shown on performance during interpersonal interactions in which socially anxious individuals rate their own social skills as lower than they are rated by their interaction partners (Clark & Arkowitz, 1975; Glasgow & Arkowitz, 1975; Melchior & Cheek, 1990).

The negative mental representation has also been shown to extend to the visibility of social anxiety symptoms. Research has shown that socially anxious individuals overestimate how visible their anxious symptomatology is (Hackmann, Surawy, & Clark, 1998; McEwan & Devins, 1983). In one study, Mulkens, De Jong, and Bogels (1997) showed that individuals high in blushing fears rated their facial colouration as more intense than indicated by either objective physiological monitoring of facial temperature or by independent judges.

What are not clearly indicated to date are the limitations of the negative mental representation. At least one early report suggested that negative self-perceptions of more cautious individuals were only demonstrated on activities related to social and verbal competence and were not shown on other activities such as intellectual, artistic, or mechanical endeavours (Efran & Korn, 1969). However, this report lacked a great deal of detail and it is not clear how these factors were assessed.

In addition, research has not investigated to what extent the negative mental representation of socially anxious individuals extends to simple appearance and general attractiveness aside from the effects of anxious symptomatology. Some reports have failed to show a relationship between measures of shyness and independent ratings of attractiveness (Jones, Briggs, & Smith, 1986), while other reports have shown that socially anxious individuals do rate themselves as generally low on attractiveness (Montgomery, Haemmerlie, & Edwards, 1991) or report less satisfaction with their attractiveness (Bruch, Giordano, & Pearl, 1986). However, to date, no study has compared self- and observer ratings of attractiveness on a single scale within the one sample. Given the importance of physical attractiveness for

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات