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Measuring shyness: analysis of the Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness scale

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Abstract

A sample of 741 university students completed the Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness scale. Item analysis showed that the scale has sound psychometric properties. There was no gender difference in total shyness scores although there were differences on two of the 14 items. A series of confirmatory factor analyses tested the fit of several models of the factor structure of the scale and showed that a two-factor model taking into account differences in the direction of item wording provided a satisfactory and parsimonious fit to the data. The implications of the factor structure for understanding the nature of trait shyness are discussed.
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1. Introduction

The major psychometric approaches to personality, for example, the Eysenck three-factor model and the 'Big Five' model, have postulated separate dimensions of extraversion and neuroticism. Nevertheless, factor analytic studies have consistently identified a 'shyness' factor that is located in the space between these two dimensions in the personality sphere in childhood and adolescence (Shiner & Caspi, 2003) and in adulthood (Crozier, 1979). Eysenck (1956) and Eysenck and Eysenck (1969) distinguished between introverted social shyness (the preference for one's

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own company but retaining the capacity to function effectively in social situations) and neurotic social shyness characterized by self-consciousness and anxiety about social encounters. Subsequent research has supported this thesis in identifying separate factors of lack of sociability and shyness (Briggs, 1988; Bruch, Gorsky, Collins, & Berger, 1989; Cheek & Buss, 1981; Jones, Briggs, & Smith, 1986; Paulhus & Trapnell, 1998). The study of shyness as a personality trait has focused on the second of these factors.

Shyness remains a controversial topic within the psychology of personality. In part, this is because of the adoption of an ordinary language term that has no single definition but has a variety of referents. In part, it is due to recognition that shyness can be analysed into various components: cognitive (in terms of acute self-consciousness, biased appraisals of situations, and self-attributions for social difficulties), affective (subjective anxiety, somatic reactions), and behavioural (inhibited, reticent behaviours). Thus, Leary (1983b), for example, has proposed that greater insight into social difficulties will be obtained if the definition of shyness is restricted to the combination of anxiety and inhibited behaviour. On the other hand, Cheek and Briggs (1990) have argued that Leary's conceptualization is too narrow and that shyness should be construed as a three-component syndrome. They suggest that not all shy people experience all of these components; self- and other-ascriptions of shyness can be based on the presence of one, two, or all three of them.

In operational terms, trait shyness seems to be unidimensional rather than a construct that involves separate components. Jones et al. (1986) found that five self-report questionnaire measures of shyness, including an 11-item version of the Cheek–Buss scale (Cheek & Buss, 1981), were substantially inter-correlated (mean $r = 0.77$, range 0.70–0.86; all Ns > 1135). Each of the five scales correlated to an equivalent degree with a separate set of personality scales, including extraversion (negative correlation), neuroticism, and several measures of social anxiety. Although these coefficients were substantial, the correlations within the set of shyness measures were invariably higher than the correlations between shyness and the other social anxiety measures. Finally, all five scales correlated substantially with self-labelled shyness (r ranged from 0.57 to 0.71). Paulhus and Trapnell (1998) report a correlation of 0.86 between a 13-item version of the Cheek–Buss scale and the Social Anxiety scale (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975), and found that a composite measure of the two scales correlated significantly with peer ratings of shyness and with a measure of amount of time spent talking during participation in a leaderless discussion group.

There exists little factor analytical evidence on the dimensionality of shyness. Jones et al. (1986) submitted 88 social anxiety items to exploratory principal axis analysis with oblique rotation and extracted three factors with eigenvalues greater than unity and following inspection of a scree test. The first factor, which had highest loadings on items from the 11-item version of the Cheek–Buss scale and the Social Avoidance and Distress Scale (Watson & Friend, 1969) and was labelled 'social avoidance and distress', accounted for 25% of the variance. The remaining factors accounted for only 3% and 2.6% of the variance respectively. Furthermore, both factors seem to be influenced by methodological considerations. All of the items with high loadings on the second factor, labelled 'social facility', are worded in the non-shy direction (e.g., 'I am probably less shy in social interactions than most people'). The direction of wording does influence the results of factor analysis even though all the items are coded in the same direction prior to analysis. For example, Russell (1996) has reported that a two-factor model related to the direction of wording provided a better fit to the data on the UCLA Loneliness Scale than did a single loneliness factor. Finally,

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