

Shyness, Embarrassment and Social Exclusion



Shyness

- ▶ Loosely associated with a range of social fears, that vary in degree
- ▶ Impact on mental and physical health

- Self-consciousness
- More negative thoughts about oneself
- Seeing oneself as awkward, unfriendly, incompetent
- Feeling less physically attractive

- Talking less, averting the eyes, using fewer facial expressions, touching oneself self-consciously
- Remembering negative comments and responses to oneself better than positives ones
- Dealing ineffectively with stress by worrying
- Pessimism
- Loneliness and social isolation
- Abusing alcohol to relax/cope

What is shyness?

- ▶ Shyness may appear as **chronic** and **dispositional**
- ▶ Levels of Shyness
 - ▶ Crozier (2001; 2002); Henderson and Zimbardo (1997)
 - ▶ Shyness may manifest at any/all of four levels:

1. Cognitive



- Negative thoughts about the self
- Worry and rumination
- Fear of negative evaluation and looking foolish to others
- Self-blaming attributions
- Believing the self as weak and others strong
- Negative bias around the self-concept (e.g. I am socially inadequate)
- A belief that there is a correct way of doing something that the shy person doesn't know, or must guess

Levels of Shyness continued...

2. Affective

- Embarrassment or self-consciousness
- Shame
- Low self-esteem
- Dejection or sadness
- Loneliness
- Depression
- Anxiety



3. Physiological

- Racing heartbeat
- Dry mouth
- Trembling or shaking
- Sweating
- Feeling faint, dizzy, sick, nervous
- Blushing
- Feeling unreal or detached
- Fear of losing control, or having a panic attack or heart attack



Levels of Shyness continued...

4. Behavioural

- Inhibition or passivity
- Averting gaze
- Avoidance of fearful situations
- Speaking very quietly
- Little body movement/excessive body movements (e.g. nodding, smiling)
- Speech faults (e.g. tongue-tied, rapid speech)
- Nervous behaviour (e.g. touching own hair/face, pulling at clothes, rubbing hands)



Crozier (2001; 2002); Henderson and Zimbardo (1997)

State and Trait shyness

Trait shyness

- ▶ Relatively stable and may reflect a genetic predisposition toward inhibition and excessive anxiety
- ▶ OR – it might emerge as a trait due to problems in development, especially during adolescence when a person's trying to establish a sense of identity

State shyness

- Interplay of processes between the cognitive, affective, behavioural and physiological levels of experience
- Withdrawal from or avoidance of the situation

Buss (1980):

- The experience of shyness emerges when a person is placed in a position of uncertainty or a situation that focuses attention on them
- The compounding variable of trait shyness

Shyness and Personality

Are shyness and introversion the same?

No.

- Introverts generally like their own company, but do not all avoid social situations
- Some extroverts are actually privately shy
 - may have the social skills to ‘carry it off’ (Zimbardo and Henderson, 1997), so have less fear of ‘being found out’
- An individual may be shy, but remain sociable

Shyness, genetics and behavioural inhibition

- ▶ Behavioural inhibition – thought to emerge from child's reactions to a perceived threat when confronted with a experiences that elicit shyness

Kagan (1994b) suggests a biological basis for shyness

Amygdala – fear and aggression

Hippocampus – long-term memory

Children with behavioural inhibition may have overstimulated fear responses

Fight or flight response

Shyness is related to heart-rate variability

(Davidson and Rickman, 1999)

Fearful and self-conscious shyness

Age differences:

- Children less likely to suffer presentation anxieties
- Levels of cognitive, emotional and social awareness not yet developed
- More likely to experience **fearful shyness**
- **Self-conscious shyness** emerges when a child develops a theory of mind



A person can have one or both forms of shyness (Crozier, 2000)

Embarrassment

- ▶ Now researched as an independent construct
- ▶ Four theories of embarrassment

Dramaturgic model

Personal standards model

Social evaluation model

Situational self-esteem



The dramaturgic model (Silver, Sabini and Parrott, 1987)

- Embarrassment follows a poor performance
 - Cannot calmly and gracefully continue
 - Agitation and aversive arousal
 - Feelings of awkwardness, stupidity and immobilisation
- Concern for public image *accompanies* embarrassment – it is not causal
- Caused by individual's belief that they cannot perform
(cannot 'act a 'part'/'role')

The social evaluation model (Edelmann, 1987)

- Contrast to dramaturgic model
- It is the concern for what others think of us that is the basis of embarrassment
- Feelings of being at a loss are merely the result of embarrassment
- Individuals simply want to avoid negative evaluations of others – judgements that they performed poorly
- But do people still feel embarrassment in failure even when they're not bothered about impressing the people watching

Situational Self-esteem

- Negative evaluations set in motion the further events that actually cause embarrassment (Miller, 1996)
- The basic cause for embarrassment is a temporary loss of self-esteem that results from public failure (Modigliani, 1971)

- Negative self-evaluations alone do not cause embarrassment
 - They are the trigger that allows individual to judge *themselves* poorly

- So – it is our own opinions of ourselves and how we perform in faulty situations that are the cause of embarrassment
- But – both low and high-self esteem individuals still feel embarrassment if others think they have performed poorly

(Miller, 1996)

The personal standard model (Babcock, 1998)

- Embarrassment results when we realise that we've failed in the standards of behaviour that we've set ourselves
- Argues that the situation itself is not the cause of embarrassment
 - If you are happy to behave outrageously or fail spectacularly, then you will not feel embarrassment

But

- When we are alone we don't feel embarrassment if we fail
- We may feel we've done well, but feel embarrassed at the response of others

(Miller, 1996)

Consideration of embarrassment models

Miller (1996) – the models overlap

Different situations can cause embarrassment resulting in not knowing how to respond
(dramaturgic model)

That may involve the fear of unwanted social evaluations.....
(social evaluation model)

That may affect your self-esteem.....
(situational self-esteem model)

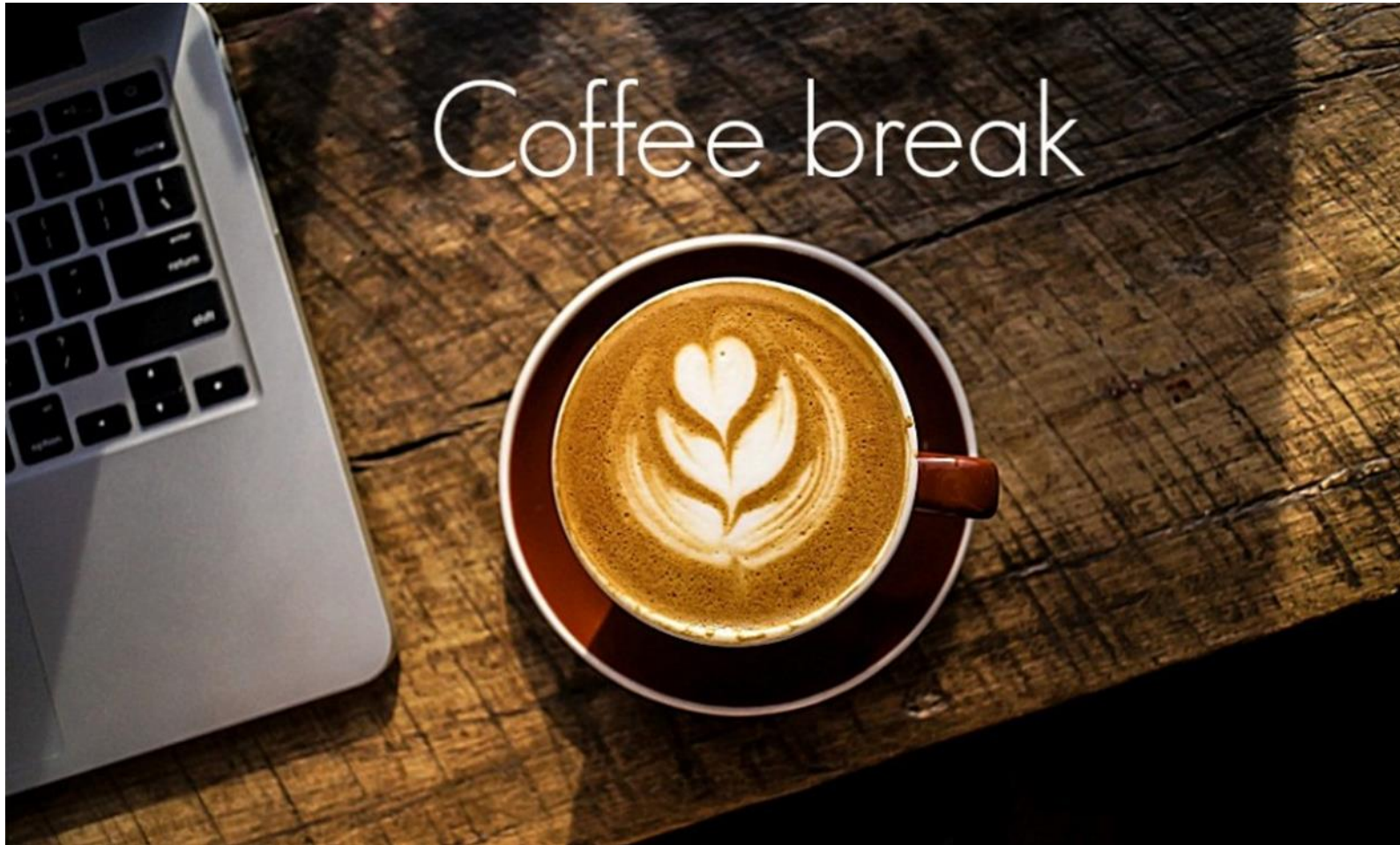
That may result in the realisation that you have let yourself down
(personal standards model)

So – embarrassment may involve all four explanations

- ▶ Dramaturgic and Situation Self-esteem models provide the strongest explanations for embarrassment

- ▶ Awkward situations do tend to cause embarrassment
- ▶ But can't cause embarrassment without creating unwanted social evaluations
- ▶ So – Negative evaluations are at the core of embarrassment

10 MINUTES!



Social exclusion

Social isolation: the phenomenon of non-participation (of an individual or group) in a society's mainstream institutions. May be voluntary or involuntary.

Social exclusion: the subset of cases in which social isolation occurs for reasons that are beyond the control of those subject to it.

- Social exclusion affects those who are unable to participate in the institutions patronised by the majority and the benefits of its rights and privileges.
- Being kept apart from others physically or emotionally
- Also – exclusion of the majority by a minority who are in a position to opt out of the mainstream institutions e.g. 'gated community'.

Social exclusion

Social exclusion is a violation of the demands of social justice

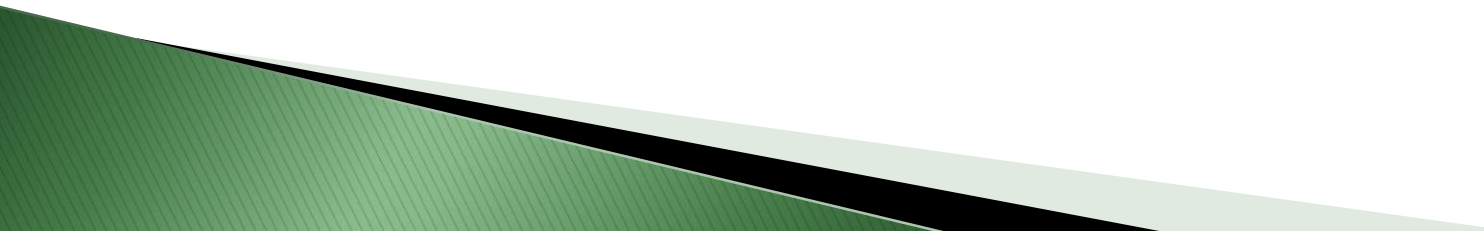
- It conflicts with equality of opportunity
- It is associated with an inability to participate effectively in politics.
- It undermines social solidarity.

Voluntary social isolation has the same effect, but is less likely to have such adverse consequences.

Useful book online

Riva, P., Eck, J. (Eds.) (2016). Social Exclusion: Psychological Approaches to Understanding and Reducing Its Impact. Springer Nature: Switzerland.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Melanie_Killen/publication/277575557_Social_exclusion_in_childhood_and_adolescence/links/581ce4ac08aea429b291fe75/Social-exclusion-in-childhood-and-adolescence.pdf



Human need for social connections

Humans evolved to forge and maintain social connections with others to obtain survival and reproductive advantages

Sensitive to any cue that signals threat to these connections

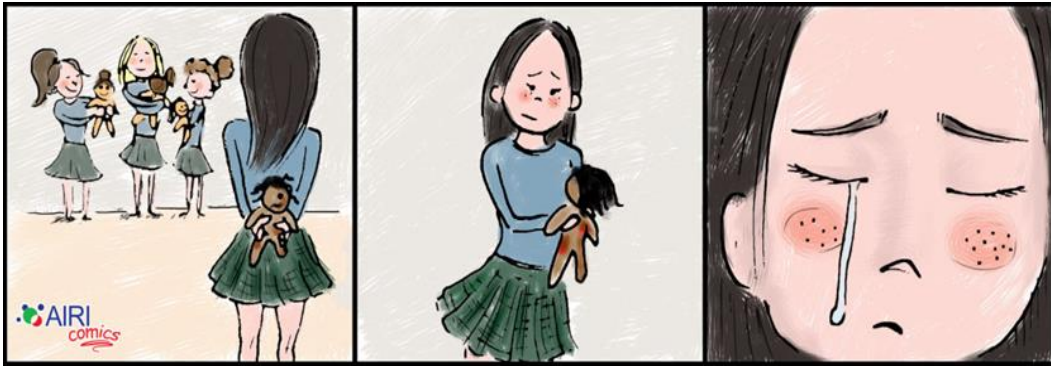
(e.g., Lieberman, 2013 ; MacDonald & Leary, 2005 ; Wesselmann, Nairne, & Williams, 2012).



Humans have this central focus on social connections, so they experience both negative psychological and physical outcomes when these connections are threatened or severed

(MacDonald & Jensen-Campbell, 2011).

Social Pain



- ▶ Individuals literally experience social pain
- ▶ Exhibited in both phenomenological and neurological pain measures

(Chen, Williams, Fitness, & Newton, 2008 ; Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003).

- ▶ Various social experiences can communicate real (or perceived) threat to social connections.
- ▶ Many are subtle, ambiguous, and sometimes unintentional

(Banki, 2012 ; Kerr & Levine, 2008 ; Richman & Leary, 2009).

Two core experiences

Rejection: explicitly told or implied that one is not wanted in a social relationship

(Blackhart, Knowles, Nelson, & Baumeister, 2009 ; Williams, 2007)

Ostracism: being ignored by an individual or group (Williams, 2007).

Rejection

- Direct negative attention
- Dehumanizing language
- Discrimination & stigmatization
- Hurtful laughter
- Micro-aggressions
- Micro-assaults
- Micro-insults
- Micro-invalidations

Ostracism

- Being ignored
- Averted eye gaze
- Being forgotten
- Information exclusion
- Language exclusion
- Biased language
- Linguistic ostracism
- Uncomfortable silence

Typical Negative Psychological Outcomes

Short-term exclusion

- Anti-social intentions & behaviours
- Basic need threat
(belonging, control, meaningful existence, self-esteem)
- Dehumanization
- Negative affect (e.g., anger, humiliation, sadness, shame)
- Neurological pain & “hurt feelings”
- Perceived ostracism (i.e., feeling ignored & excluded)
- Relational devaluation

Long-term exclusion

- Alienation
- Depression
- Helplessness
- Meaninglessness

Wesselmann et al (2016)

Neurological findings

Relatively few experiments focusing upon behavioural evidence of rejection sensitivity in adolescence.

Sebastian et al. (2010)

Neural development underlies commonly observed adolescent phenomena such as susceptibility to peer influence and sensitivity to peer rejection.

Directly compared the affective consequences of an experimental ostracism manipulation (Cyberball) in female adolescents and adults.

The ostracism condition led to...

Significantly greater affective consequences in the adolescents compared with adults.

Suggests that the ability to regulate distress resulting from ostracism continues to develop between adolescence and adulthood.

Childhood and Adolescence

Will, van Lier, Crone & Güroğlu (2016)

‘Chronic Childhood Peer Rejection is Associated with Heightened Neural Responses to Social Exclusion During Adolescence’

Found:

- ▶ Chronic childhood peer rejection is associated with heightened neural responses to social exclusion during adolescence
- ▶ This has implications for understanding the processes through which peer rejection may lead to adverse effects on mental health over time.

Biological findings: body temperature

- Being ostracized or excluded, even briefly and by strangers, is painful and threatens fundamental needs.
- Excluded individuals perceive the room as cooler and that they desire warmer drinks. (Zhong and Leonardelli, 2008)
- Theory within embodiment. People use metaphorical associations to understand social exclusion (Landau, Meier, & Keefer, 2010).

- Ilzerman et al. (2012) suggest that people feel colder because they are colder.
- Findings support the idea that more complex metaphorical understandings of social relations are scaffolded onto literal changes in bodily temperature

- Study 1: Being excluded in an online ball tossing game leads to lowering of finger temperatures
- Study 2: Negative affect typically experienced after such social exclusion was alleviated by holding a cup of warm tea
- Supports concept of interaction between body and social relations

Cognitive effects

Baumeister, Twenge & Nuss (2002)

- ▶ Three studies: Effects of randomly assigned messages of social exclusion.

All studies:

- ▶ Significant and large decrements in intelligent thought
- ▶ Including IQ and Graduate Record Examination test performance
- ▶ Found among people told they were likely to end up alone in life.

A decline in cognitive performance was found in:

- ▶ Complex cognitive tasks such as effortful logic and reasoning
- ▶ Simple information processing remained intact despite the social exclusion.
- ▶ The cognitive impairments appeared to involve reductions in both speed (effort) and accuracy.

- ▶ The effects were specific to social exclusion.
- ▶ Predictions of future non-social misfortunes (accidents and injuries) – performed well
- ▶ Not affected by mood

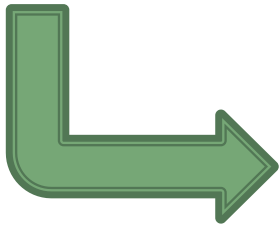
Cognitive effects

DeWall, Maner, Rouby (2009): Examined basic, early-in-the-cognitive-stream consequences of exclusion.

Across 4 experiments: Threat of exclusion increased selective attention to smiling faces
– became attuned to signs of social acceptance.

Compared with non-excluded participants, participants who experienced the threat of exclusion:

- Were faster to identify smiling faces within a “crowd” of discrepant faces
- Fixated more of their attention on smiling faces in eye-tracking tasks
- Slower to disengage their attention from smiling faces in a visual cueing experiment



- ▶ These attentional ‘attunements’ – specific to positive, social targets.
- ▶ Not to faces conveying social disapproval / positive non-social images.
- ▶ The threat of social exclusion motivates people to connect with sources of acceptance

Cognitive effects

Twenge, Catenese and Baumeister (2003)

Hypothesised:

Socially excluded individuals enter a defensive state of cognitive deconstruction.

This avoids:

- Meaningful thought
- Emotion
- Self-awareness

Characterized by:

- Lethargy
- Altered time flow.

Findings:

Social rejection led to:

- An overestimation of time intervals
- A focus on the present rather than the future
- A failure to delay gratification
- A likelihood to agree that “Life is meaningless”

Excluded participants:

- Wrote fewer words and displayed slower reaction times
- Chose fewer emotion words in an implicit emotion task
- Tried to escape from self-awareness by facing away from a mirror

Cognition and Social Interaction

DeWall, Twenge, Gitter & Baumeister (2009): No explanation of why social rejection causes aggression.

Hypothesis: Social exclusion increases the inclination to perceive neutral information as hostile, which has implications for aggression.

Findings

Compared to control participants, socially excluded participants were more likely to:

- Rate aggressive and ambiguous words as similar
- Complete word fragments with aggressive words
- Rate the ambiguous actions of another person as hostile

Hostile cognitive bias among excluded people was related to their aggressive treatment of:

- Others not involved in the exclusion experience
- Others with whom participants had no previous contact

Social aspects

Braza, Azurmendi & Munoz, (2009)

98 five-year-old children (43 boys and 55 girls; mean age 5 years 3 months for boys and girls)

Examined the effects of social intelligence, empathy, verbal ability and appearance-reality distinction on the level of peer acceptance

Also moderating role of gender...

Social aspects

Findings:

- Main effect of social intelligence on peer acceptance
- Effects that were moderated by gender:
 - A significant and positive effect of verbal ability on social acceptance was found for boys;
 - Appearance–reality distinction was found to have a positive effect social acceptance in the case of girls;
 - And although empathy had a significant positive effect on social acceptance for both boys and girls, this effect was more pronounced among boys.

Results suggest that abilities promoting peer acceptance are different for boys and girls.

Emotional effects

Is emotion a separate issue? Cognition and Emotion? Social and Emotional issues?

Does emotion play a part in cognitive effects? Social behaviours?

Is social exclusion an emotional or a cognitive phenomena. Or both combined?

Influences on social interactions?

Ginette et al. (2009). Rejection Elicits Emotional Reactions but Neither Causes Immediate Distress nor Lowers Self-Esteem: A Meta-Analytic Review of 192 Studies on Social Exclusion. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*

Seminar

Consider...

- Characteristics of socially excluded children (Correlation? Causality?)
- Reduction of social exclusion?
- Buffering?
- Interventions?

Questions?

