UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Quiet: Forced versus Chosen Behaviour

Exploring the communicational aspects of social phobia and introversion/extraversion and their possible similarities and dissimilarities.

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Abstract

Social phobia, or social anxiety disorder, is a mental disorder in which one experiences anxiety in social situations, alongside fear of ridicule and embarrassment, and as a consequence seeks to avoid these situations as much as possible. It goes in other words beyond regular shyness. Introversion is part of a personality dimension and is a state in which a person derives energy from being alone, finding primary pleasure in connecting to oneself rather than to others. Being quiet and one's ability to socialise are communicational aspects that often occur in both behavioural types, resulting in introversion being seen as an irreplaceable connection to social phobia. In other words, being socially phobic would also mean that one is an introvert. This thesis takes this notion into closer examination, concluding that there is a possibility of being part of the extraverted dimension while still being socially phobic. It includes a literary study and an investigation of what socially phobic individuals themselves have to say; their own views and thoughts on this issue.

Keywords

Content

Introduction

Does being prohibited from enjoying social situations make a person comfortable with being alone? Those who often consider themselves as being introverts may feel the need for solitude rather than social contact. The first impressions one may experience when encountering someone with social phobia are arguably similar to those of introversion. Social phobia is a psychological state in which a person fears and experiences anxiety when being in a social environment. Their communicational behaviour, then, often points to very little interest in social contact, due to a reserved body language and silence; and the perceived determination may be that the person is satisfied with being left alone. However, if a person is perceived to be comfortable with solitude, it may not at all be their actual wish. Being socially phobic may prohibit persons from expressing their true desire, their true personality. Although the personality feature of introversion inhibits many of the same communicational elements in behaviour as social phobia, one's behaviour may not always reflect one's true personality. Is there a possibility to be a socially phobic extravert? It may be argued that there can be great danger in claiming someone to be 'comfortable' with being alone when all that person's behaviour expresses is avoiding anxiety.

While a personality test would reflect one's behaviour in certain situations, scoring high on introversion for example (usually adopting withdrawn and silent communicational features), may not show if these are forced or chosen behaviours. One may argue that, if the only reason for keeping to oneself is a forced behaviour due to anxiety, this may be a problem for employers, teachers or parents; and foremost the person themselves, having desires for a life that do not show in social behaviour. Being left alone because of the belief that one is content that way may thus have unwanted effects.

In *Unmasking Social Anxiety Disorder*, Stein labels social phobia as "a disorder of lost opportunities" (2001:185). These opportunities, functioning more successfully in social environments, need not only be discovered in people early in life, but also need more closely researched definitions. To investigate further the issue of forced versus chosen behaviour, and their connection to social phobia and introversion, this thesis will compare and contrast research already made with those thoughts and opinions socially phobic individuals have to say about it themselves.

The research questions dealt with in this thesis are:
1. Is it possible to be a socially phobic extravert?
2. Is avoiding social situations always a choice or can it be forced?

Purpose and Aim

In a society that seems to favour those who belong to the extrovert dimension, from success in school to being favoured in job interviews, this is an arguably current issue to deal with. This study may be significant mainly to personality researchers and communicational researchers exploring the subjects of social and bodily behaviour and silence. Additionally, there may also

be an important interest among teachers, school therapists and parents, being in the presence of children and young adults who are socially avoidant. Furthermore, the study will be of great significance to those suffering from social phobia, introversion or both; as a way of better understanding their true personality features and desires, as to decrease confusion. The most important purpose for how this research is conducted is to put scientific and communicational researchers' views into question by exploring the issue from the aspect of those who actually suffer from avoidant and anxious social behaviour.

The study discusses whether personality tests need changing, so that both behaviour and personality may be separated between introversion and social phobia, and social phobia may be correctly detected and thus also treated much earlier.

Theoretical Background and Literature Study

Social Phobia

The psychological state of fearing or feeling uncomfortable in social interactions goes by many different definitions and names, among the most common social phobia and social anxiety disorder. What the word 'phobia' indicates in particular though, is the sense of fear and anxiety and the consecutive action of avoidance. Swedish health service website Vårdguiden mentions that social phobia is not equal to those situations where most people feel anxious and nervous, such as stage fright or moments before giving a speech, but include life changing habits as to avoid feelings of being judged by others. Vårdguiden include symptoms of social phobia to be blushing, raised heart rate, stuttering, sweating, shaking, dizziness and numbness in fingers (Vårdguiden, 2016). Furthermore, British health service website NHS defines social anxiety disorder and social phobia to be different terms of the same condition, being a "complex phobia" that is "much more than 'shyness'" (NHS, 2016). Social anxiety disorder seems in other words to be a more frequently used term within the English language, whereas social phobia is the more frequently used term in Sweden.

What needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that social phobia may arise from many different reasons, both hereditary and environmental circumstances, and can be connected to other types of conditions such as autism and Asperger's Syndrome. Additionally, it may lead to many other psychological states, very commonly depression (Stein, 2001:185). The focus of this research, though, lies in the communicational aspects of the inhibition of expressing oneself arising from anxiety symptoms, and furthermore the search of which powers these inhibitions have on individual's behaviour and the reflection it makes in their personality. In *Avoidant Personality Disorder…*, Reich discusses additional traits of social phobia:

> *persistent, irrational fear of and compelling desire to avoid a situation in which the individual is exposed to possible scrutiny by others and fears that he or she may act in a way that will be humiliating or embarrassing* (2009:90).

In other words, the effect that social phobia has on an individual is that they often feel a significant fear of doing or saying the 'wrong' thing, so much that they most often rather would avoid such a situation all together. Arguably, what this leads to is the risk of not being able to establish close relationships. In addition to the term social phobia, Reich presents the concept Avoidant Personality Disorder (APD), arguing that it is extremely similar to social phobia although somewhat more serious where there is an unwillingness to establish relationship or friendship for the reason that one is hypersensitive and inhibiting a very low self-esteem. However, and important to take into consideration, Reich argues that a person with APD still has a wish for close relationships and the "desire for affection and acceptance" (2009:90). Additionally, the difference between social phobia and APD is argued by Eikenaes to be that "patients with APD fear *relationships* with other people, whereas patients with SP [i.e. social phobia] fear social *situations*" (Eikenaes, 2013:748). One may argue that APD is one step more serious than social phobia, but what they both have in common is the fear itself. This fear may have many levels, there may be those who are able to handle being around other people, whereas others may experience serious panic attacks. Eikenaes goes on to mention some statements that are taken into consideration within determining this state of fear, among others "it is hard for me to feel loved by people I have become close to" and "I often feel that I am not as worthy as other people" (Eikenaes, 2013:750).

Furthermore, as is established by both Vårdguiden and NHS, social phobia differs from 'simple' shyness, mainly since social phobia in much greater aspect has the force of "compromising the ability of [...] individuals to pursue desired goals and to participate fully in the life of their community." (Stravynski, 2007:3). In other words, the way in which the socially phobic would 'hide' from society has a significant effect on their lives; they might not go to school or work, or even the supermarket. Arguably, shyness is a milder form which is argued not in a serious way to inhibit a person from living their life. Bearing that in mind, in *Shyness and Society,* Scott uses the term 'shyness', but includes anxiety within the concept. Arguably then, what her study entails, is very much similar to what is focused on in this thesis, even though she has chosen the word 'shy'. Considering the other side of these social encounters, Scott makes a conclusion from her research that "an encounter with someone who seems shy can feel awkward, strained and too much like hard work, whereas a conversation with a non-shy, chatty and confident person may run smoothly and pleasurably..." (Scott, 2007:1). This adds the prejudice of interpersonal communication including silence, arguing that speaking to someone who is quiet is not a desire with many people, and that silence correlates with being unconfident.

The Wiley Blackwell handbook of social anxiety disorder presents some of the statements that correlate to social phobia. Some examples of these are:
- "Other people will stare and laugh if I do something embarrassing in public"
- "I have nothing to talk about with others and everyone else has lots of interesting things to say"
- "I need to look my best or no one will want to talk to me"
- "People will stare at me if I go out" (Weeks, 2014:504)

The thoughts of the socially phobic seem to often revolve around the negative judgement from others, revealing the strong wish for acceptance and fitting in. Everything one says or

does, every part of one's communicational channels, receive so much attention and thought that one may choose to do as little as possible in order to hide from attention.

One main question that requires further notice is if people who are quiet really wish to be quiet, is that who they really are, does one's behaviour reflect one's personality? Scott refers this issue as "the illusion of competence" (2007:3), meaning that knowing what to say does not mean it always is said, but is purely a way of avoiding the "minefield of potential blunders" (2007:39). Scott reveals in her study that many quiet people see talkative people as fake, that they are playing a role. In contrast, Stein mentions that prejudice exists of the quiet being mistaken as "snobs" (2001:185), the assumption that they do not care for the other person and thus does not speak. There is then a clear ambivalence between the two forces of talking and being quiet, prejudices go both ways. It may be argued that such behaviours cause people to act differently and consider others to be something they really are not.

Having social phobia and the intent of not attracting unwanted attention goes along with many precautionary behaviours such as not wearing any bright coloured clothes and hiding oneself behind heavy make-up. This arguably relates to being quiet; not saying anything has the effect of not saying the wrong thing, diminishing the possibility of standing out. Can silence then just be a way of adopting "safety behaviours" (Scott, 2007:7)? On the contrary though, as Scott also notices, if the attractive features of someone is their talkativeness, then being quiet means standing out. This may then induce more anxiety within someone and thus also the stress to find something to say may be causing a black-out.

In *Social Phobia: An Interpersonal Approach,* Stravynski mentions further factors that determine social phobia, namely that it is in interpersonal relations they can be thoroughly detected. He argues that "any attempt at understanding a person must take account of the social context in which he or she functions" (2014:11). In other words, the way in which an individual behaves in communicational environments, reflects the way in which others understand this individual to be. Additionally, Scott mentions this alongside the performance of identities and that the audience more or less defines one's "social significance" (2007:37). This social significance is in turn the factor that plays the lead role in defining whether one is socially phobic or not, although, one may argue that communicative behaviour can look similar for different reasons, meaning for example that social withdrawal may not be a result of social phobia, or even shyness.

Historically, experience of anxiety is something that has always existed in humans, a normal bodily reaction to danger. Furthermore, this also very commonly occurs in a situation of power and dominance. Stravynski argues that power most certainly often is displayed with "direct fixed stare", "fierce expression" and "loud and imperious voice" whereas powerlessness meets these behaviours with "lowered eyes", "averted gaze", "bowed head" and "softly spoken and apologetic tones" (2014:26). Anxiety and fear are thus two behavioural reactions to dominance and power. In the eyes of the socially phobic, the other person in a social situation can thus be seen as the one in power. The one who seems talkative and confident is the one who dominates and decides what is right and wrong; the judge of one's 'social significance'. Quoting social psychologist Philip Zimbardo, Scott argues that "the most commonly cited examples of shyness-inducing situations were being with strangers, large groups and people in position of authority [...] manifest in physical symptoms such as blushing, shaking, a dry mouth and a pounding heartbeat" (2007:4). Although shyness, as is

already established, is a milder psychological state than social phobia, one may detect similarities in behaviour and thus also similarities in personality. What may be further established then, is the importance of context and situation; who one is communicating with, and where. Even though the aspect of power and dominance may be seen more often by the socially phobic, there may be instances where they are able to 'put their guard down'. Within these moments, will they all act in the same way?

Scott refers to introversion as something that differs from the shy and argues that "it was believed that the introvert would avoid social situations by choice, because they simply preferred their own company: unlike the shy, they were not highly sociable" (2007:47). What this means is that introversion is separated from shyness, and indeed social phobia, but that they may not be combined; that being shy means the avoidance is not by choice. This is an instance where one may argue that shyness and social phobia are separated. Scott is defining the shy as 'highly sociable' and someone who wishes to speak but is prohibited from doing so. Although many researchers have argued that the socially phobic wish for a more sociable life, this may not be the case.

Finally, one may ask the question of whether or not social phobia is restricted to age, culture or gender. Both Vårdguiden and NHS mention that it most commonly appears in childhood or adolescence. Additionally, Stravynski argues that "social fearfulness is a universal feature, especially among adults" (2014:22) and Scott mentions that "by the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, it seems that these gendered boundaries are becoming blurred, and shyness is increasingly seen as a problem for both men and women" (Scott, 2007:21).

Introversion/Extraversion

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung was the first to mention the concept of introversion and extraversion. In *The collected works of C. G. Jung*, he presents the definition of these psychological types and that they, when they are habitual, have different relations of *object* to *subject*. He defines introversion as an "inward-turning of *libido*" (1971:453), meaning arguably that one finds primary pleasure in connecting to oneself rather than to others. Extraversion, then, includes the "positive dependence on the object" (1971: 427) and thus the preferred pleasure in connecting with others. One seemingly interesting detection Jung discovers is the notion that one may not only be attached to one specific type, it depends as always on situation and context. One may argue that a person need not identify with either introversion or extraversion, but rather own some traits of each, and additionally that introverts may find themselves in an extraverted phase, and vice versa (1971:148). In other words, if those who belong to the more extraverted type were to appear introverted, they would consequently display a more withdrawn behaviour than usual; they would stand out more.

Much like the view presented in the previous section on the talkative and confident person, Jung explains the extravert as someone who "appears more mobile, more full of life and activity" (1971:148). On the contrary, the introvert most usually displays the practice of introspection and withdrawal, very much like the socially phobic. Their behaviours may then

arguably be correlated and compared. However, Jung comes to an interesting conclusion, namely "however true and profound such an apprehension may sometimes be, it suffers from one very important limitation: it overlooks the living reality of the person observed, since it always judges him by his unconscious mirror-image instead of by his actual appearance" (1971:151). Is there a possibility that one can be quiet and withdrawn without having to be deemed introverted or shy?

In *Happiness, introversion-extraversion…,* Hills et al. (2001) mention additional definitions of the introvert and extravert. They argue that the extravert is someone who is comfortable and has a need for social situations, whereas an introvert is more attracted to independence and solitude. One important point made by Hills et al. is that introverts often are "represented as [...] lacking social competence" (2001:597) whereas the main trait of an introvert is that they actually enjoy being alone and do not always feel the need for social interaction. In other words, a person who identifies as an introvert is highly likely to be content with their lifestyle. In contrast, a person with social phobia may adopt many of the behaviours correlated to the introvert while desiring the behaviours of the extravert. Additionally, although one may display a lack of social competence, either if one is introverted or socially phobic; there may be other factors that play a role in one's non-sociable behaviour.

Professor of psychology, H. J. Eysenck presents in his work *Readings in Extraversion-Introversion…* the various determining factors of introversion. He shows a classic psychological diagram showing four temperaments in personality, namely introverted, extraverted, unstable and stable (1970:36), and their relations to each other. The relation between unstable and introverted displays conditions such as anxious, pessimistic, unsociable and quiet. The relations between stable and introverted show instead conditions like careful, thoughtful, controlled and calm. Being extraverted and unstable includes restless, aggressive, excitable, impulsive and optimistic; and the stable-extraverted side of the diagram show traits of being sociable, outgoing, talkative, lively and carefree. Keeping in mind that this belongs to an arguably outdated research, it shows that anxiety and silence are part of an unstable introverted behaviour. Dividing introversion and extraversion into stable and unstable dimensions seems to be a more intricate way of determining behaviour, and indeed, people may shift from different parts of the diagram to others. Noticeably though, it is detected once again that the aspect of being quiet is deemed as an unstable introverted behaviour; arguably meaning to be an undesirable trait.

From research made by Trull, regarding the 'big five structure', it is argued that "low levels of extraversion (i.e., high introversion) are associated with symptoms of the schizoid, schizotypal, obsessive-compulsive, and avoidant personality disorders" (1992:555). This proposes additional definition that social phobia is connected to an introverted personality. It needs to be noticed that another dimension, neuroticism, plays a role in this determination, and indeed in the nature of one's personality. Jung argues that "hysterics and psychopaths [...] are extraverted neurotics" and that "dysthymics (anxiety states, reactive depressions, obsessive compulsive patients) [...] are introverted neurotics" (1970:101). In other words, high scores on neuroticism and introversion would result in social phobia. Neuroticism may in other words be compared with the unstable part of Eysenck's diagram. Moreover, Jung mentions that "in questionnaires of extraversion-introversion, items indicative of social

shyness have always been scored as prognostic of introversion" (1970:107). Clear proof, in other words, has been detected, that within personality research, there seems to be a focus on one's communicational behaviour.

Moreover, Jung makes a distinction between "an introverted type of social shyness" and, "a neurotic type of social shyness" (1970:102). He argues that an introvert has no interest in other people, but has the ability if needed, whereas neuroticism induces anxiety and fear and thus avoidance. So far, this may be positively connected to social phobia and its features. However, Jung adds that the neurotic "frequently wishes that he could be more sociable" (1970:108). In other words, those who experience anxiety within social situations all wish for a more sociable personality.

The main issue of these 'big-five' dimensions is arguably that introversion-extraversion suggests that an introverted behaviour correlates with an introverted personality. Trull argues that "the avoidant is introverted because of excessive self-consciousness, anxiety, and vulnerability" (1992:558). Taking Jung's definition into consideration here, what Trull seems to suggest is that the avoidant finds pleasure in relating to the subject rather than the object (solitude and reflection is preferred over company and action). Although the avoidant adopts an introverted behaviour, are they retrieving pleasure from it or are they forced to? If one is forced to act in a certain way, does this reflect one's personality? Lucas at al. poses the question: "does extraversion represent a tendency to be sociable, or is it a tendency to experience positive emotions?" (2000:452). Indeed, this is an issue that may not show on these dimensions. Within their research, Lucas et al. include the differences between 'sociability' and 'affiliation', the former having a correlation to enjoying interpersonal situations and the latter to enjoying interpersonal relationships. They include in their "Extraversion Scale Items" (2000:468), statements such as:

- "You enjoy talking to strangers"
- "You like talking to family members"
- "Talking to people is one of the most enjoyable activities in life"
- "If someone does something you do not like, you tell them"
- "You always express your opinions in groups" and
- "When relaxing you prefer being with others rather than being alone".

Correlating on the other hand to introversion, there are statements such as:

- "You enjoy being alone" and
- "You find it pleasant to work by yourself".

There are clear and multiple usages of 'enjoy' and 'pleasure'. Does the respondent correlate these words to the actual sense of pleasure, or rather one side of the scenario being preferred to the other? In other words, if one has to choose between social contact and being home alone, is that choice always connected to pleasure and enjoyment? Another major discovery with this test is that it seemingly entails the prejudices mentioned in the section regarding social phobia. One of the statements reads, "You prefer to be with people who are exciting rather than quiet" (2000:468). Scoring high on the extraversion level may mean in other

words that one prefers not to interact with quiet people, and that those are, even if they are left alone, enjoying solitude anyway. The issue that this may suggest is that people could be left alone, seeming that that is what they want and that it makes them feel better, when that might not be the case.

As a conclusion of this literary study, social phobia (or social anxiety disorder) is a mental disorder in which one experiences anxiety and fear in social situations and as a consequence tries to avoid these situations as much as possible. There are arguably different levels of anxiety and fear, and Avoidant Personality Disorder can be seen as a stronger level and shyness as a milder one. There are additional arguments that deem shyness as something that does not entail anxiety and thus not prohibit a person from living a normal life. Although these concepts are linguistically separated, they may be used by both researchers and individuals as meaning different things; as Jung talks about the 'socially shy'. Introversion is a personality determinant that is displayed through a dislike for and withdrawal from social encounters. Whereas social phobia and introversion are displayed through similar behaviour, and thus someone who is socially phobic would score high on introversion, there may be argued to be no substance to determine whether or not one has the wish for a more sociable life or not.

Methodology

The methods used for this research are (i) a literature study, (ii) exploring discussions on an online forum and (iii) conducting a questionnaire-based online interview.

The literature study is an important part of this research and includes a review of theories and earlier findings. The methods used for the theory and literary research are mainly searches on Google Scholar including keywords such as 'introversion', 'extraversion' and 'social phobia'. Access to those articles is further found as electronic resources and physical books at the University of Gothenburg library. In order to find the most recent information on the medical terminology of 'social phobia', an online search for 'social phobia' first in Swedish and then in English has been made. The purpose of finding a definition online is the ability to receive the newest and most updated information on the subject. The search results included links to Swedish health service website Vårdguiden and British health service website NHS. The importance of including NHS was mainly the reason that linguistic elements of the terminology were significant; social phobia and Social Anxiety Disorder were discovered to be two definitions of the same condition. Research including keywords 'social anxiety' was additionally considered important.

The initial way of method considered was to conduct a questionnaire for those who suffer from social phobia. One-to-one interviews were seen as an issue since this way of communicating can be very uncomfortable for those who are socially phobic; it may arguably then be difficult to find people who are willing to participate and they might find it difficult to speak freely and open up. As a way of retrieving a greater amount of data, an online forum has been studied. Communicating online gives these people greater anonymity and thus the ability to discuss incidents and feelings in a more open and relaxed way. The methods used

for finding an online forum include a google search for "social phobia" + "forum". The main reason for searching for English speaking people is to avoid any information to be lost in translation. One of the first websites found was Social Anxiety UK (http://www.social-anxiety.org.uk/). The reason for choosing this particular website was that, when accessing the forum, it informs the reader that in 2012 it was a winner of Reader's Choice. This information strengthened the trust that it is a serious and well established organisation. The forum chosen, The Social Anxiety Room, is limited to those who experience anxiety in social situations. Approximately one hundred of the most recent threads from the 20th of April to the 1st of April were read through, finding twenty-one comments that were considered significant for this research. In order to receive more data dealing with the subject of introversion and extraversion, a search for keywords 'introversion' and 'introvert' was made. The search was limited to threads from the year of 2016, as a possibly most recent reflection of society at the moment of this thesis. A further four threads and sixteen comments were chosen on the subject of introversion.

In order to receive greater content for this research, a questionnaire was conducted including five open-ended questions (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire was posted to the forum and replies from twelve participants were registered. The main reason for choosing to combine forum research and a questionnaire was to strengthen the issue surrounding whether these individuals consider themselves as having social anxiety or not. All respondents of the questionnaire replied yes. Furthermore, it was significant to explore further the subjects of introversion and extraversion and for individuals to share their own thoughts on the issue; shedding light on how much they know and how they themselves interpret the meanings of classifications of personality and anxious behaviour.

Limitations and Possible Risks

By posting texts on an online forum, one does not only have the possibility to be anonymous, but one also is able to be honest and comfortably share all thoughts with others who are in the same situation. This does however mean that there are no or very little indications of age, gender, or cultural background. The focus will lie solely on people who experience anxiety in social situations. This limitation is however deemed to be acceptable in order to reach the desired outcomes of the intended research. Additionally, personality tests of social phobia and introversion have been found to be difficult to get hold of in their entirety. Some examples of statements posed in these tests are however included.

Results of the study of an online forum

The following section will present findings from the research conducted in the online forum *The Social Anxiety Room*, including comparisons to the two concepts of social phobia and introversion. *The Social Anxiety Room* is a forum found on the British website http://www.social-anxiety.org.uk/. The following quote is taken from this website and explains their initial aim and goals:

*The three main aims of this site are to provide a **starting point** for people just finding out about SA and related issues, to enable them to access further information through this site and through external links; to act as a central hub for the **community** of those with social anxiety problems in the UK; and to attempt to **raise the profile** of SA problems and campaign for change, so that in future, people afflicted by them don't have to suffer in silence as so many of us have done in the past.*

It may then be taken into consideration that this research mainly handles UK citizens, and that these individuals may be in different stages of their condition; some not entirely sure of what they are suffering from, some at the end of their treatment. Furthermore, there is no or very little indication on which age they are or which gender they belong to. This is however information that is difficult to obtain since these individuals wish to be anonymous. Moreover, this research seeks to explore the communicational aspects of being in a socially anxious state, which, as has been confirmed, is present in all cultures, among all ages, and all genders. Therefore, the need for these types of categorisations is at this point decided to be redundant.

Communicational aspects following physical and mental reactions

It is noticeable that the state of anxiety prohibits the socially phobic to interact with other people, as one of the members puts it,

I always wonder whether they like me or whether they think I'm weird, plus being socially anxious and not liking myself I feel uncomfortable just being around them. (Clockface, 2016a).

The thoughts that come up when in a social situation include traits of low self-esteem, worries that one would not be accepted by the other person, and the constant fear of embarrassing oneself. Arguably, the way in which many socially phobic handle situations when around other people is the act of daydreaming, to escape reality. As another member explains:

two people I know came and spoke to me as I walked through town. I had been so deep in maladaptive daydreaming that I wasn't on my guard. (Dandelion10, 2016a)

The need of preparation of avoidant behaviour is seemingly of great importance since the act of surprise would only worsen the anxiety and even induce physical sickness:

the sickening thought of them putting me on the spot by asking me to go for a coffee right there and then, or asking what i'm doing later than night as there's a party or some sort of social event they're going to and i end up agreeing because i don't have an excuse ready[1] (Clyde33, 2016a)

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[1] All quotes contain the same grammar and spelling as they are originally written

> *Being trapped by politeness sitting in someones house is a big nono for me.* (Laracroft, 2016a)

One member who seems to be more experienced and easier 'on guard', still explains the notion of anxiety being present, but in a way that might not be noticeable to the other individual:

> *usually I can cope and "act" fine when it comes to interactions even though I feel like I am dying inside with panic attacks.* (The Warrior of Jupiter, 2016a)

What may arguably be the communicational response when fearing, or even despising, talkative people, is to get out of the situation as soon as possible, resulting in agreeing to social gatherings one does not wish to participate in. However, there are seemingly other reactions that in the eyes of the other may seem as the same type of communicational reaction. Wishing to participate in interpersonal communication, but worried of how to act, adopting the withdrawal feature of waiting for the other person to talk. The following quotes are retrieved from a conversation with the title *Making the first move:*

> *Is something I suck at. Truth is I never know what to say to get the conversational ball rolling. I am very much a "You speak to me and I'll respond as best I can" person. Conversationally the other person has to be in the driving seat. If they metaphorically let go of the conversational wheel then I'm at a loss as to what to do. Then before that is the whole issue of knowing when to approach people or not.* (Firemonkey, 2016a)

> *I wasn't really aware that I did this until someone pointed it out to me. I found talking to people difficult, so always waited for people to talk to me because why would I want to put myself in a difficult situation?* (Buscuits, 2016a)

> *I'm the same ! If someone doesn't come up to me and start talking to me then there is no way I'm going to start talking to them! Even then I don't ask questions I just try and answer whatever I am being asked* (Purplerose, 2016a)

> *if someone does start talking to me, I don't like asking personal questions in case they start asking personal questions back, so I never really get beyond talking about the weather!* (Michelle06, 2016a)

> *I can't even say good morning first to colleagues when I arrive at work which is stupid because the worst they can do is not say it back but that's unlikely considering how nice they are!* (Memory, 2016a)

The withdrawal and avoidant behaviour they adopt may or may not be voluntary. As the last example shows, it is considered a "stupid" thought to imagine the other person not speaking back, or that the other person really would be bothered by it.

Selective Mutism

One word that is used by many different members is *selective mutism.* As a way of initially understanding this trait, it is explained by Oxford Dictionary of Psychology as "a persistent failure to speak in certain social situations in which speaking is expected, such as at school or among peers, despite a proven ability to speak in other situations" (Colman, 2008). This concept suggests that one may know what to say, or rather be aware of various 'social codes', but chooses not to. In many situations this is a result of anxiety. The following quotes are retrieved from a post entitled *Selective Mutism:*

> *My anxiety makes me quiet* (Clyde33, 2016b)

> *Yeah I was a lot like that in school and around people I didn't feel comfortable with* (Purplesnarf, 2016a)

> *I suppose it's a bit like people on quiz shows would know the answer if they were at home, but under the spot light and pressure they just can't think of the answer. I felt like that all the time [...] When I was at home or with friends that I'd known since I was little, I was completely normal [...] I found myself in new situations and with new people. I think that is what made me really depressed - being unable to be myself or be able to talk to people. Also it made me feel like two totally different people. In the end I used to just avoid everyone because it was so much easier than having to cope with being around people.* (Buscuits, 2016b)

Undoubtedly, the comparison to "people on quiz shows" display what has been shown in the previous section, namely that anxiety, when being exposed to possible danger exists naturally in all humans. What is shown by this comparison is the nature of wanting to interact, knowing how to, but failing to find words, with fear of saying the wrong ones. This member also mentions a crucially important aspect, feeling like two different people. This feeling suggests further that the detection of one's 'true personality', as it were, is not only difficult for others to see, but for oneself to show as well. The wish for a more social life is also explained by another member, who says:

> *My other family tell me how amazing I'm going to do, I hate them so much when they say this. They barely know me, they don't know how sad I feel all the time. They think I choose to be this awkward and have no friends, therefore I must put all my effort into work. I want to go out to parties, I want to socialise, I wanted to live like a normal teenager. I feel I've missed out on my teenage years and it's only going to get worse.* (Velociraptor, 2016a)

There seems to be those who see avoidant behaviour as a two-way street. One member argues that,

Fear of ridicule makes us more socially anxious quiet people are often considered boring or say the wrong thing so make a fool of themselves. Its not really irrational thinking. I think most people are judgemental and ridicule people who are different or considered strange. A large problem in overcoming SA I found at work was that when you are identified as a bit odd then many people avoid and dont want to know you making it much harder to socialise (Fungus, 2016)

As has been discussed in the section regarding social phobia, being quiet may make you stand out, especially in a talkative environment. The correlation between 'quiet' and 'boring' is something that many are commenting on in this forum. What this last commenter suggests further though, is feeling met by an avoidant behaviour because of this 'standing out' appearing "a bit odd". In contrast to other members, who simply wish that people left them alone, this member seems to want to socialise, suggesting deeper yearning for the behaviour of the extravert.

Extraversion and Introversion

The concepts of introversion and extraversion are widely discussed in the forum, many seem to correlate social anxiety with introversion, and others see them as separate entities.

My guess is that the majority of people who have SA are also introverted. (Marco, 2016)

sometimes people confuse SA with being introverted (Dontlookatme, 2016)

These two quotes suggest the notion of a distinction between 'being an introvert' and 'being introverted'. In other words, one may behave in an introverted way although one is not 'an introvert'.

It's a knock for somebody who's quite extrovert but for me being so socially anxious, the rejection is making my anxiety worse [...] I came across my ideal job yesterday which was landscape gardening for a large family home which would suit me down to a T! Minimum contact with humans and doing something I love which is gardening and getting my hands dirty (Angelina, 2016a)

people seem to suddenly become far wittier and sharper tongued in the group, now could this be because extroverts become way more energised and switched on in groups?? Could be...I think it's simply because of ego and a persons self esteem and ability to banter [...] I believe this occurs mostly with extroverts as they are energised and see pleasure in group dynamics. They may find gossip, group banter and showing their wit as being pleasurable. Not only this, they practice their craft everyday, at work, with friends, online...they have built up those muscles to the point where it seems impossible to introverts ...this also related to their egos as well, they probably have a truckload of self esteem and ego.. (GoldFish, 2016a)

The kind of people I feel anxious around are extroverts, people who are generally chatty and those who I perceive as having happy and interesting lives. (Clockface, 2016b)

She knew I was quiet and therefore her apparent perception of me was that I was boring and weird, so I think she deliberately tried to make me feel bad by firing questions at me, one after the other, without allowing me to answer calmly, which if I had been allowed to would have eased my nerves. But predictably I made a right idiot of myself because my SA was not helped by my lack of a rapport with her and her brashness. (Clockface, 2016c)

I do nothing, so have nothing to talk about, the great thing about extroverts is thay love to talk about themselves, so I find it easier talking to them (listening). (Dt192, 2016)

It is shown here, as Scott also argues, that there exists negative judgment of extroversion by the socially phobic. However, as the last comment displays, there are also those who are comfortable in the company of chatty people.

The following quotes are retrieved from a conversation started by user BritishPeace, entitled *I read in a book:*

one of the symptomatology for SA is that they yearn for social contact and want to be liked but are anxious when they have social contact. But I have never loved social contact and would much rather be alone which led me to believe that I didn't have SA but another condition called Schizoid Personality Disorder. I dislike social contact and do not really want it, and cannot really understand people that do. (BritishPeace, 2016a)

I don't think SA is a yearn for social contact, at least not for me I love my alone time. I do feel a need to be accepted by others though. (Soulastic, 2016)

I love social contact, I'm naturally (without SA) really social [...] which is why I hate having it so much (MarieClaire57, 2016)

I have always yearned for social contact, friends and relationships, which makes the fact that I get so fearful around people and find it so difficult to interact with and connect with people so devastating. If you simply prefer being alone, and this isn't rooted in fear, that just makes you an introvert. (Mr. Spaceman, 2016)

When I was younger I hated being around people, but in later years I actually wanted to be sociable. I generally like people and wanted to have friends and relationships [...] It was this fact that made my social anxieties so much harder to bear. I've never been an introvert [...] I find that much of the pain we feel in life is due to the gap between the life we want to have and the reality of the life we actually do have. The

wider the gap, the more painful life can feel. Social Anxiety Disorder forced me so far away from the person I wanted to be and turned me into something I didn't like. That's why SA distressed me as much as it did (Ajax Amsterdam, 2016a)

These excerpts show the struggle of how social anxiety may turn a person into someone they are not, someone they do not recognise. The last commenter proposes quite strongly "I've never been an introvert", realising how much of a gap in their personality that anxiety creates. Although some examples show the distancing from introversion, there are also members who strongly connect to it. The following quotes are retrieved from a discussion entitled *Difference between being an introvert and having SA?:*

> *I read something a while back about being an introvert, and i related to every single word of it. I'm confused now as to the difference between being an introvert and someone who has SA. I hate social get-togethers and being in the company of large groups of people who i don't know; that's the main things i can't deal with. Is this because i have SA (which i've always thought i had) or is it because I'm an introvert? If you're an introvert, does that mean you automatically have SA? I'll have to do some online research on this when i get time.* (Clyde33, 2016c)

> *An introvert is happier by themselves most of the time. Someone with SA avoids social situations due to irrational fear. You can be both* (DavidK, 2016)

> *From what I understand,an introvert prefers their own company but doesn't necessarily get anxiety about socialising. It's possible to be an introvert and have SA though.* (Beagle, 2016a)

> *No one is either an introvert or extrovert, its never that black and white people are a mixture of both. Even the most strictest introvert [...] enjoys the company of others and needs social interaction.* (Stotch, 2016)

> *I used to wonder about this a lot in the past. I was horribly SA yet never really saw myself as an introvert. I generally liked people and wanted to be out doing things and enjoying company. It was just crippling anxiety that saw me practice avoidance rather than face the anxiety head-on while doing the things I wanted to do. So I never really identified at all with being an introvert. Sometimes people would call me a "loner" but I never felt comfortable with that. I was simply horribly anxious, thus avoidant. Being on my own was not really a choice. Eventually I came to identify more with the term Ambivert, although I don't really put such labels on myself these days.* (Ajax Amsterdam, 2016b)

> *It worse to be SA because you have no choice but to be an introvert even though you wish you could be an extrovert* (Misska, 2016)

I'm at the point where the only logical next step would be actually getting irl social contacts and going out more (exposure) (Cordyceps, 2016)

I also live by myself so I guess managing is not as tricky for me. I do get bored, lonely and depressed though which perversely makes me withdraw more. (Mo34, 2016)

Recharging one's batteries

Another arguably interesting discovery is the definition of introversion versus extraversion as to how one 'charges their batteries':

Introversion just means you derive energy from being alone. "Recharging" your batteries. Extroversion is the opposite: gaining energy from being sociable. It has nothing to do with SA. (Z., 2016a)

From what I've read/seen on TV, introverts "recharge" by spending time alone while extoverts "recharge" by being with others. This is perhaps too simplistic and people can change in terms of where they are on the spectrum. SA is a further complication as someone who is naturally extrovert may become SA due to bad experiences and subsequent styles of thinking and might withdraw from social situations to lessen the anxiety but might find this very difficult due to not really wanting to be on their own. (Beagle, 2016b)

The introvert recharges by being alone, whilst the extrovert recharges by socialising. This is a gross over-simplification, but it penetrates the essence and fundamental characteristics of these two personality types (which don't exist in a pure form). I am an introvert - a "pathological" one at that. My energy is essentially maintained by being alone. That is what I am built for, and it is what I do best. (Z., 2016b)

The main conclusions from this part of the research are that there are two different ways of reacting when being 'put on the spot'; avoidance of social gatherings may be either a choice or a force. Some discuss the approaching of an acquaintance to be rude and too forceful, whereas others instead blame their anxiety for not being able to talk and to say the things they wish. There are both arguments of introversion correlating with social anxiety and them being two different entities. The concluding factor that argues the latter is the notion of how one would charge one's batteries; in what situation one feels relaxed and energised. Whereas it is among other people or alone, they both exist with socially anxious people, suggesting that one may very well be extroverted, as many of them additionally indicate.

Results from questionnaire

The questionnaire was conducted after the online forum research as a way of deepening the research. It consists of five open-ended questions and has been posted on the forum. Twelve answers have been registered and used for further discussion.

In addition to the five larger questions, there are five yes/no questions: whether or not they consider themselves to be introvert, extrovert, having social phobia, having social anxiety and being shy. Out of the twelve participants, six considered themselves to be introverts, two as extroverts, three as both, and one as neither. Furthermore, all participants considered themselves as having social anxiety, whereas all but two considered themselves as having social phobia. Lastly, three participants did not consider themselves as being shy.

The following section will present the questions and the answers, participants being marked as P1-P12. Furthermore, the participants' anonymous names will be followed by notes if they considered themselves as introvert (I), extrovert (E), both (B), or neither (N).

"You're so quiet"

1. <u>If you would hear someone say "you're so quiet", how would you react? What kind of thoughts would go around in your head?</u>

This question had the main purpose of determining the prejudices of the quiet. As discussed in the literary study, the two forces of talking and being quiet are a struggle for someone with social phobia. Most of the time it is met with negativity, as established in the previous research section; being quiet often correlates with being boring. Someone who is talkative and confident may utter this statement as a way of making the other person talk more. But what effect does it really have?

> *I'd agree with them but would be annoyed at their need to point it out* (P1-I)

> *Im not in a good place and someone has noticed. If i say what im thinking it would be rude, because if i was quiet it would probably mean i am having anxiety and want to go home.* (P2-N)

> *Resentment mainly. I'm painfully aware of how weird I am in public so having attention drawn to it causes shame and annoyance.* (P3-E)

> *I've had this happen a few times and in those instances it's made me even more lost for words, especially when it's people I don't know as well. I start to panic, so I can't really think of anything other than the fact that I'm not quiet, the un-anxious version of me, anyway but I can never say that to the person, because I am unable to prove it. I*

normally just say "err.." and hope that the conversation moves on quickly when they see I'm feeling uncomfortable. (P4-I)

I would think that they had me down to a tee [=perfectly, exactly]. (P5-I)

I'd be angry, it would make more anxious and more likely not to say anything else. (P7-B)

Feel a bit upset - but know it's true. (P8-I)

I would say yes I have always been quite shy and quiet but when you get to know me I'm not so bad. (P9-B)

I would get incredibly worried that I' m not talking enough and that I'm coming across as Unfriendly/boring. (P10-E)

That they were criticising me even though it is a neutral expression. That they thought I was boring and not lively. (P11-I)

Embarrassed, annoyed, criticised, inferior. (P12-I)

As Participant 4 points out, hearing the words "you are so quiet" may have the effect of the socially anxious to turn even more quiet. Being put on the spot causes them to feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. One interesting detection is that Participant 3 and 10 consider themselves as extroverts and correlate silence with being weird, unfriendly and boring. They seem to have a wish to speak more and feel annoyed that they are not.

Avoiding social events

2. <u>Have you ever stayed at home instead of going to a social event because of your anxiety, and if so, what have your feelings about it been like?</u>

This question deals with the phobic nature of social phobia, namely the act of avoidance. Is this avoidance a behaviour that it purely a choice, or is it forced?

Yes. I felt very upset about it. (P1-I)

guilt mainly, because people who do not suffer with SA might think I am being selfish, unsociable or boring. (P2-N)

Yes. Catastrophising about it, feelings of self-loathing, hopelessness. (P3-E)

I don't get invited to a lot of social events so the ones I do get invited to I try to make an effort and go despite my anxiety. There's only been one instance where I it was too much and decided not to go. I thought I would feel guilty about declining and annoying/disappointing my friends even though they would never react badly, and understood completely, but I actually felt a great amount of relief. (P4-I)

Yes, I have had a mixture of fear, relief, loathing. (P5-I)

Yes, Usually nobody will want me there, they'll ignore me or just laugh at me being nervous. (P7-B)

Yes - feel relieved for not going but also disappointed in myself as may have enjoyed it. (P8-I)

Yes, I feel ashamed and hate lying to people, the worst thing is that I know I would probably enjoy it but my anxiety makes me feel to Ill to attend. (P9-B)

Yes. Frustrated. I cut myself off from my friends. I want to hang out with them but sometimes it's just too scary. (P10-E)

That I am glad I didn't go because I don't have to deal with the anxiety and don't like social events any way. (P11-I)

annoyance, as though i am missing out, envy, hatred towards others. (P12-I)

One frequent word, as also discovered in the previous research section, is 'boring', the fear of other people judging one for not going. Additionally, as Participant 7 mentions, there is the fear of people not wanting one to even be there, fearing to be ignored and ridiculed. There seems however to also be many instances of feelings of relief, and also the mix of them two. Even though participants consider themselves as introverts or extraverts, both feelings seem to occur.

Extrovert with Social Anxiety

3. <u>Do you think it is possible to be an extrovert with social anxiety?</u>

The reason behind choosing the word 'anxiety' instead of 'phobia' is the fact that this is a forum based in the UK, which seems to favour that word.

I think so, yes. Though I imagine it's even worse for them than for introverts. (P1-I)

Yes I do. SA is not shyness. I am not shy in the least. Im not extrovert either but im not mousey. SA has triggers, or specific situations or circumstances. i don't think it has much to do with being intro/extroverted. (P2-N)

But I don't feel energised from being around people, I feel drained. That's usually due to racing thoughts and adrenaline. (P3-E)

Yes, I could see it being a possibility. (P4-I)

No (P5-I)

Yes, of course. I am an ambivert with social anxiety. (P6-B)

Yes, Social anxiety is just a small part of who you are. (P7-B)

I wouldn't have thought so. Possible someone was extrovert and developed social anxiety. (P8-I)

Only after a few drinks have calmed me down. (P9-B)

Yes. I am an extrovert. When working, I like to discuss ideas with others and once I get to know people and feel more comfortable I am definitely an extrovert. It's just situations where I feel uncomfortable I feel very introverted. (P10-E)

Yes, I am an introvert I believe but some people think I have an extraverted nature in some situations because I can be a trouble maker and class clown and talk about sexual things. (P11-I)

Yes. (P12-I)

Only two out of twelve participants doubt the fact that one can be extravert with social anxiety. One seemingly interesting discovery made here is the notion that one may have social anxiety but not consider oneself as being shy. As Participant 2 points out, social anxiety is triggered by other factors than one's personality, meaning that it may have very little to do with shyness or introversion/extraversion.

Comfort and enjoyment

4. Words that always seem to be included in questions about both social anxiety and extraversion are 'comfortable' and 'enjoy', as in "you enjoy talking to strangers" and "you are comfortable around other people", or "you enjoy being alone". What are your thoughts about these words? What would your responses be to these statements?

The reason behind this question was to put the linguistic elements of these statements into question. Comfort and enjoyment are not always choices. If one is forced to stay at home, does that mean one really feels comfortable?

> *I generally am not comfortable around other people, don't really enjoy talking to strangers, but I don't always enjoy being alone either.* (P1-I)

> *All these statements are entirely circumstantial. I dont mind passing the time with a stranger. I might enjoy it if i find something in common with them. If they are talking too much I will get anxious and need to leave. I am comfortable around most people, but it depends who they are. It is being around people that prevents me from doing what i want and therefore my anxiety kicks in. Eg. if i have had enough of a social situation, dont want to converse anymore etc, it may be rude to leave and i have to stay longer than i want to which makes me avery anxious. I enjoy being alone but not for long lengths of time. I am not alone often, so its hard for me to know what my threshold might be.* (P2-N)

> *The extent to which I enjoy or don't enjoy anything is decided by my mental limitations. So I spend a lot of time alone in my room, which I 'enjoy' in the sense that I feel completely safe, but do not enjoy in the sense that I am dreadfully lonely and do not like my own company very much. Whether or not I'm able to enjoy anything usually boils down to whether I can cope.* (P3-E)

> *For my responses I would say that I don't enjoy talking to strangers, I'm not comfortable around most people and I enjoy being alone. These answers are reflected on my social anxiety, and I don't honestly know if they would be the same if I didn't have SA. I take it that introverts are also supposed to answer these questions in the same way and extroverts the opposite... but then would that mean all people with SA are introverts and all introverts have SA? The terms seem to make the ideas of introversion and SA blend into one, and then extroversion is for everyone else who is very social and loves communicating.* (P4-I)

> *I would agree with wanting to be alone.* (P5-I)

> *I can relate on both sides. Sometimes I love being round people and getting attention sometimes it is the opposite.* (P7-B)

> *I'm not comfortable or enjoy being round most people. In fact I dislike most people :).* (P8-I)

> *I am only comfortable and enjoy things when I feel relaxed, the problem is is that it's very rare I feel relaxed.* (P9-B)

It depends on the situation. I am comfortable around other people in certain situations. In other situations this is my worse nightmare! (P10-E)

I do not enjoy those situations particularly and would enjoy being alone or not interacting more. I do not feel as comfortable as others in those situations either, so I think they are good descriptive words for what people like me feel like. (P11-I)

I want to be able to feel comfotable with others and don't always feel OK making the choice not to be around others even though sometime i need to in order to recharge. i find these assumptions about being comfortable annoying and not always true. I am not comfortable around people because of my introversion, but because of my shyness and social anxiety. (P12-I)

Being comfortable seems to in some cases be a complicated word. Participant 9 points out that being relaxed plays a role in the word, but that they often do not feel relaxed. Very often, anxiety occurs even when being alone. Thoughts of being boring and talked about negatively may arise when avoiding a social event, in this case, comfort may be argued to be non-existent even though the alternative may be seen as worse. Participant 3 mentions that 'enjoy' being alone very often correlates with feeling safe, rather than having fun.

True Personality

5. <u>What would you define your 'true personality' to be? Is it different from how you act around other people?</u>

The somewhat great confusion between behaviour and personality needs to be further questioned. This question was posed as a way of distinguishing if the participants consider themselves as being the way they act around other people. Can extraversion and introversion occur in different environments, and if so, where can one find one's true personality?

My true personality is how I am around my family members, but my anxiety prevents me from showing my true personality around most other people. (P1-I)

Thats very hard to answer. I think i adjust my personality to the expectations of who i am with at the time. But those facets are all me. (P2-N)

My true personality would be someone who is talkative and a bit of a joker. Wears attention grabbing things and does performance related things like amateur dramatics or dance. I can't express that with people though. (P3-E)

I am only myself when I am with my immediate family and my two closest friends - my anxiety interferes so much that I barely have any personality with any other social interaction. It is therefore difficult for me to define my true personality because I've never been able to show it. I know that with most people, they act differently in front of

groups such as work colleagues, friends and family but are still themselves in each situation. I wonder whether I would be different from how I act now with my family and friends in social situations away from them or whether that is how I would be without SA in front of everyone. With my family and friends, I'm actually the loudest one which is kind of odd since I'm so quiet around everyone else. (P4-I)

Worrier, anxiety ridden. (P5-I)

It depends on the people I'm with. If I'm with people like close friends I would act quite extroverted,but people I'm not sure of or I'm nervous of I would tend to be completely intoroverted. (P7-B)

Nice caring person with good sense of humour. Act differently around other people. (P8-I)

100% different, I have learnt to put on a brave face and cheat my way through life but behind closed doors I feel like a mess. (P9-B)

My true personality is that which eventually comes out once I get to know people and start to feel more comfortable around people. One of my friends once told me that when they met me, they didn't know how to make me talk, now they don't know how to shut me up! (P10-E)

Quiet, a thinker, nice, normal to me, have strange traits to others, love history and health topics e.g. nutrition. Most people would describe me as that although they probably think I am more outgoing than I actually am because they cannot see inside my head, nor me in theirs. However, I cannot see how I act to others so maybe I act in an outgoing mway more than I picture I do in my head. For instance, I think people believe I am a good speaker and quite confident in some ways, but I nearly cannot read out and stuggle with it. (P11-I)

laid back, open minded and yes defiantly different. i internalise my thoughts and become less open minded due to my social anxiety. (P12-I)

Many of the participants seem to agree that their true personality is different from how they act around strangers. Being around people they do not know triggers anxiety and they become quiet, whereas being around people they know very well, like their immediate family, they suddenly become the talkative one. Participant 4 seems not to be sure since he/she feel like having never been able to show his/her true personality. At the same time, they mention that around family and friends, they are the 'loudest one', as opposed to normally being very quiet.

As a concluding point for this section, there is further evidence of the socially anxious feeling both introverted and extraverted. Furthermore, there are even those who consider themselves as not being shy, but merely having a mental disorder prohibiting them in certain social

situations. Furthermore, the way in which these people see themselves, the way in which they behave differently in different situations, are considered by some as all being part of their true self, but by some as totally different.

Discussion

This section will take into consideration the results found in all three sections and further discuss similarities and dissimilarities between them.

"My anxiety makes me quiet"

Undoubtedly, the most noticeable common denominator among social phobia, shyness and introversion is silence. The level of talkativeness seems in many cases, both in professional research and personal life, to be the defining factor determining if someone is sociable, boring, weird, lively, dominant, powerful, different, strange, preferring solitude or wishing to speak more. What has been taken into discussion in this thesis is whether or not this is a trustworthy source of determining personality and behaviour.

Looking firstly on the communicational reactions with many of the socially phobic, the fear of making a fool of oneself, saying the wrong thing and being ridiculed or rejected, most often result in silence. As Scott defines it: avoiding the "minefield of potential blunders" (2007:39). Many feel a suffering from this, since they wish they could speak, as member "Misska" puts it, "you have no choice but to be an introvert even though you wish you could be an extrovert" (Misska, 2016). Others feel the opposite, proposing the fact that talkative people are too confident and egocentric. Additionally, having someone pointing out the fact that one is quiet is referred to by many of the respondents as worsening their anxiety. The ability to speak does in other words not become easier to handle if someone suggests pointing it out. However, these factors undoubtedly play little role in determining whether or not there is an actual wish to speak.

In addition, Scott argues that interpersonal communication is the factor that determines quiet behaviour, meaning that it is one's communicational reactions, showing avoidant behaviour, withdrawal and silence, that determine social phobia. However, there are complications that come along with these assumptions. One of the discoveries made in this thesis is that communicational behaviour may be deceiving. Social reactions may look the same; some socially phobic individuals have learned how they are expected to act even though they feel "trapped", others keep quiet although they wish to speak. One arguably interesting point made here is the comparison made to participants in a quiz show on TV. This may also be correlated with hearing someone say "you're so quiet". The way in which one momentarily detects danger and feels fear and anxiety, makes one not able to speak, although one very much knows how to. In other words, an introverted behaviour (withdrawal, selective mutism) may be involuntary, prohibited by anxiety; not only within the socially phobic, but within all humans. This, as always, depends on context and as Scott mentions, the sudden feeling of dominance and power. As Stravynski also argues "the degradation of status, as manifested by the manner in which one is treated, is associated with shame [...] and

humiliation [...] to exclude him or her from the group" (2014:26). Pointing out differences may for the speaker not be seen as excluding someone from the group, but for the socially phobic, this triggers thoughts of ridicule and rudeness.

Silence can be looked upon in different ways; where prejudice and communicative research may say one thing, the actual human being may say another. Like some of the members agree, they would wait for the other person to speak first, as "Biscuits" explains, "why would I want to put myself in a difficult situation?" (2016a). This instance proves a desire to speak, with a possibility that he/she is thinking of something they could say, but anxiety keeping them from taking the first step.

Social Phobia versus Introversion

The most important factor that may be seen as distinguishing introversion from social phobia deals with anxiety, if one experiences anxiety during social situations and if this leads to avoiding them in order to escape anxiety, then one may, with little doubt, be socially phobic. In other words, staying at home instead of socialising is something one feels forced to do, as opposed to it being a choice. However, as this research suggests, the avoidant behaviour can be a choice although one suffers from social phobia. One example from the questionnaire is Participant 4 saying "I thought I would feel guilty about declining and annoying/disappointing my friends […] but I actually felt a great amount of relief" (P4-I).

Undoubtedly, whether withdrawal behaviour is chosen or forced, may result in a great confusion for other people in one's life such as classmates, family and teachers, who may not realise whether the avoidant behaviour is a choice or not. In other words, it is of great importance to see introversion and social phobia as two different entities. Moreover, one may instead make a distinction between an introverted behaviour and an introverted personality, arguing that behaviour and personality does not always correlate. Another important question to keep in mind is where the actual desire lies. As has been discussed, social phobia may lead to depression, an extremely important issue to deal with. Considering what Velociraptor had to say about family, they could not detect his/her actual desire,

> They barely know me, they don't know how sad I feel all the time. They think I choose to be this awkward and have no friends […] I want to go out to parties, I want to socialise, I wanted to live like a normal teenager. I feel I've missed out on my teenage years and it's only going to get worse (Velociraptor, 2016a).

As many researchers and psychologists seem to suggest, being shy and socially phobic means one actually yearn for having social contact, but is forced not to. Although, Scott asks the question of whether social situations propose an 'inability' for shy people or pure 'unwillingness' (Scott, 2007:1). A question that would benefit from further investigation. However, she states that "the shy actor knows that s/he is expected to participate, and indeed is keen to do so[…]" (2007:45). It must be taken into consideration that it has been established that Scott's research, as she includes anxiety within the word 'shyness', is similar to that of social phobia. Additionally, when speaking of a shy behaviour, one may correlate it

to, what it is called in this section, an introverted behaviour. Keeping that in mind, one may realise from this research that being keen to participate in social interactions is not always the case with the socially phobic. Some of the members of the forum and the questionnaire state that they desire to be alone.

Furthermore, as is argued by Jung, one may not only be extraverted or introverted, and one may find oneself in a different state (for example an extravert in an introverted phase) depending on situation in life and in the world (1971:151). As one member of the forum also states, "its never that black and white" (Stotch, 2016), it is possible to be both; i.e. an "ambivert". Only a few of the members decline the possibility of being an extrovert with social anxiety, whereas many of them argue that they find themselves behaving extraverted in some situations and introverted in others; in other words, their anxiety comes and goes. Keeping in mind that introversion and anxiety may come and go, what arguably counts is how one sees oneself; one's true personality. Interesting factors discovered in this research are that most of them see their true self come out when being around those people who would not induce any anxiety; where they are comfortable. Some of them agree on their personality being different in different situations, but always true; whereas some of them claim to be someone they are not around other people. As Participant 9 mentions, "I have learnt to put on a brave face and cheat my way through life but behind closed doors I feel like a mess" (P9-B).

Traits suggesting an introverted personality

In order to look further into the possibility of being socially phobic and at the same time both introverted and extraverted, there are members of the forum that not only put these words in black and white, but also describes behaviours that can be related to both dimensions. The result from the questionnaire suggest further belief that many of them consider themselves as either introvert, extravert, both or neither. Many of the members felt anxious over meeting an acquaintance as a surprise, being put on the spot and not having an excuse ready. The reluctance towards making social plans suggests that these individuals are displaying an introverted personality. Additionally, the desire to experience less contact with other people may arguably go beyond their anxiety, since these are thoughts that are freely expressed and not pinpointed to a certain situation. Exploring the suggested statements connected to introversion mentioned by Lucas et al., one may suggest that the forum members expressing an introverted personality connect to for example "you enjoy being alone" (2000:468). Those of the respondents who consider as being introvert explain that they in many instances prefer to be alone, even though it entails avoiding anxiety, as Participant 5 says, "I would agree with wanting to be alone" (P5-I). The question concerning whether or not they enjoy or feel comfortable being alone, Participant 11 explains, "I do not enjoy those situations particularly and would enjoy being alone or not interacting more. I do not feel as comfortable as others in those situations either, so I think they are good descriptive words for what people like me feel like" (P11-I). Although these feelings of relief occur, it must be noticed that however one defines oneself, there may be a fear of missing out, as Participant 8 argues, "Yes - feel relieved for not going but also disappointed in myself as may have enjoyed it" (P8-I).

Participant 11 considers to be an introvert and that they do not usually like social events. They go on to discuss that "yes, I am an introvert I believe but some people think I

have an extraverted nature in some situations because I can be a trouble maker and class clown and talk about sexual things" (P11-I).

Traits suggesting an extraverted personality

Investigating the extraverted personality, many of the members express a wish to be able to speak, desiring for the other person to take the "conversational wheel". In other words, they would not desire for the person to walk away or not exist, but rather take hold of the conversation as for them to feel safer. The issue dealing with the feeling of having two personalities, one that is social and one that is not, seems to be tearing many members apart. Arguments like "I'm naturally (without SA) really social" (MarieClaire57, 2016) and "I've never been an introvert" (Ajax Amsterdam, 2016a) display quite clearly the view that if they were not to be prohibited by anxiety, they would indeed be highly social beings, i.e. extraverted. Looking then, at Lucas et al.'s statements of extraversion, one may detect that these members would also, when not prohibited by anxiety, "enjoy talking to strangers", "like talking to family members", and most importantly "prefer being with others rather than being alone" (2000:468).

Two of the respondents of the questionnaire consider themselves as extroverts and not introverts, as they argue:

> *My true personality would be someone who is talkative and a bit of a joker. Wears attention grabbing things and does performance related things like amateur dramatics or dance. I can't express that with people though.* (P3-E)

> *One of my friends once told me that when they met me, they didn't know how to make me talk, now they don't know how to shut me up!* (P10-E)

They both seem to be annoyed at the fact that they are quiet when they wish they could speak and feel disappointed when they avoid going to social events. However, as pointed out by Participant 3, it seems to always depend on the situation, arguing that sometimes there is a need to be alone. They go on to argue that they do not feel energised being around other people, but 'drained'. They explain though that this is because of their anxiety and arguably not a factor relating to introversion. Participant 10, on the other hand, seem to correlate introversion with behaviour, arguing that "once I get to know people and feel more comfortable I am definitely an extrovert. It's just situations where I feel uncomfortable I feel very introverted" (P10-E). These statements suggest further belief that, agreeing with Jung, one may be part of both dimensions, solely depending on situation.

Conclusion and future research

This thesis has sought to understand the communicational aspects of anxiety arising in social situations and how they correlate with the personality dimension of introversion/extraversion. Humans have always had a protecting behaviour against danger resulting in anxiety symptoms, but this is something that the socially phobic would experience in everyday situations. The dominance and power they see in others may prohibit them from leading a normal life. One question dealt with is if being forced to behave in a certain way really is a reflection of one's personality. Furthermore, this thesis has taken into consideration the fact that behaviour can be either chosen or forced, which may cause great confusion. The greatest discovery made that is a significant factor in this confusion is being quiet. Undoubtedly, social phobia may be discovered physically and communicatively, considering the symptoms of blushing, sweating and trembling, among others. There seems however to exist difference of opinion of how to define the very reason behind being quiet.

This thesis has concluded that it is possible to have an extraverted personality at the same time as one is suffering from social phobia. The main reason behind this is that although one is forced to adopt an introverted type of behaviour, it does not necessarily reflect one's desired personality. One may experience anxiety from declining social encounters, as the wish would be to actually speak more. These issues taken into consideration when exploring online forum discussions and questionnaire strengthens the belief that introversion and social phobia, although containing of similar communicational behaviour, are different entities.

Social phobia differs from introversion most importantly by the emergence of anxiety in social situations. Although this is, according to personality research, the addition of neuroticism, the level of social desire is arguably not properly detected. There is a distinction between being forced to adopt avoidant social behaviour and choosing to; both of them though being proven to be part of the socially phobic nature. Social phobia does not only mean one is forced, research shows that one may very well be an introverted socially phobic person.

This thesis suggest that personality studies need to take further notice of the difference between behaviour and personality when it comes to the dimension of extraversion/introversion, adding to their examination more thorough detection of situation and context, true desires, and the very reason behind one's talkativeness or lack thereof. Being quiet does not mean one does not have anything to say; or whether one wants to say it or not. What this results in, is silence being a factor of behaviour and personality that may reach over all dimensions and mental states. This need for closer attention is mostly supported by proof that behaviour does not always reflect personality and if it were to be mistaken, may lead to great confusion, unwanted solitude, or deep depression.

The most important thing that needs to be determined is whether social behaviour in different situations are forced or chosen. One may choose to not speak; one may feel forced to speak. In the same way, introverted behaviour may be displayed voluntarily or involuntarily.

One possible way of more successfully determining an introverted versus extraverted personality, is suggested to be a question of how one 'charges one's batteries'. In other words, if one feels the need for solitude or social contact as a way of receiving new energy and relaxation. It may also be suggested that introverted behaviour and introverted personality need to be separated entities, keeping in mind that behaviour may display a false personality. Furthermore, a valuable contribution to the research would be discovering the aspect and thoughts of those who do not suffer from social phobia.

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Appendix

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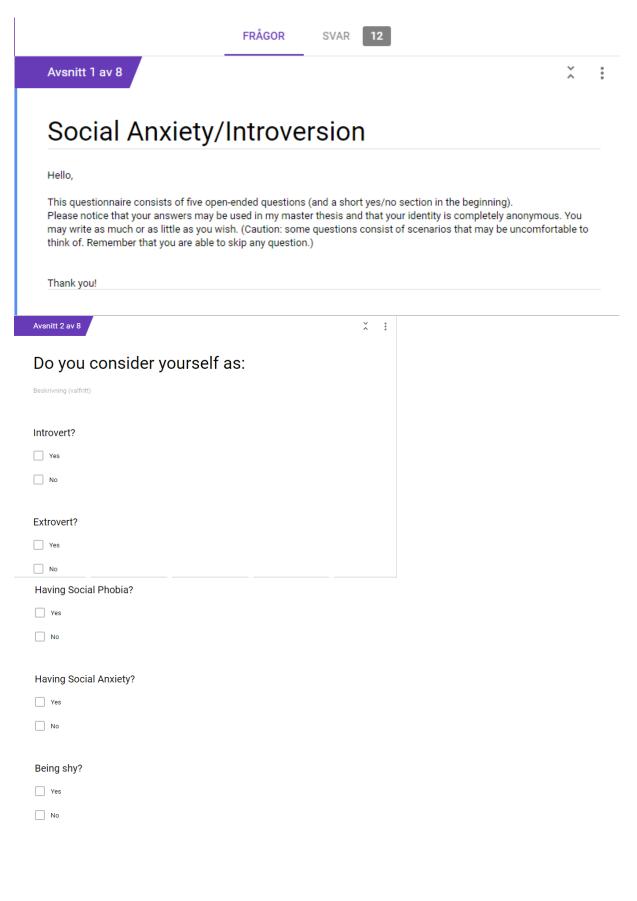
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Questionnaire

Avsnitt 1 av 8

Social Anxiety/Introversion

Hello,

This questionnaire consists of five open-ended questions (and a short yes/no section in the beginning).
Please notice that your answers may be used in my master thesis and that your identity is completely anonymous. You may write as much or as little as you wish. (Caution: some questions consist of scenarios that may be uncomfortable to think of. Remember that you are able to skip any question.)

Thank you!

Avsnitt 2 av 8

Do you consider yourself as:

Beskrivning (valfritt)

Introvert?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Extrovert?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Having Social Phobia?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Having Social Anxiety?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Being shy?

☐ Yes

☐ No

1/5. If you would hear someone say "you're so quiet", how would you react? What kind of thoughts would go round in your head?

Beskrivning (valfritt)

Fråga

Lång svarstext

2/5. Have you ever stayed at home instead of going to a social event because of your anxiety, and if so, what have your feelings about it been like?

Beskrivning (valfritt)

Fråga

Lång svarstext

3/5. Do you think it is possible to be an extrovert with social anxiety?

Beskrivning (valfritt)

Fråga

Lång svarstext

4/5. Words that always seem to be included in questions about both social anxiety and introversion/extraversion are 'comfortable' and 'enjoy', as in "you enjoy talking to strangers" and "you are comfortable around other people", or "you enjoy being alone". What are your thoughts about these words? What would your responses be to these statements?

Beskrivning (valfritt)

5/5. How would you define your 'true personality'? Is it different from how you act around other people?

Beskrivning (valfritt)

Fråga

Lång svarstext

Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Beskrivning (valfritt)

Fråga

Lång svarstext