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## Shyness and social skills: A person-oriented approach to explore their mismatch

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Shyness and social skills (SS) are often portrayed as opposing constructs. In fact, research shows that shyness leads to reduced opportunities to develop, practice, and cultivate effective social skills, which then leads to low peer acceptance (Albano, 1995; Albano et al., 1995). However, these two constructs are theoretically distinct and could coexist (Cheek & Buss, 1981; Schmidt & Fox, 1994, 1995; Tang et al., 2016). For example, highly shy individuals may still be able to display adequate social skills at the behavioral level.

Taking a person-oriented approach, the first aim of the current study seeks to identify and investigate groups of children whose shyness and social skill deficits do not match. The following hypothesis was formulated for this aim:

Hypothesis 1: Four groups would emerge from the cluster analysis: Group A – optimal group (low shyness, high SS); Group B – incongruent-alloof group (low shyness, low SS); Group C – incongruent-social group (high shyness, high SS); and Group D – adverse group (high shyness, low SS).

The second aim is to investigate whether the aforementioned profiles predict developmental outcomes (i.e., general distress, loneliness and dissatisfaction, and peer victimization). For this aim, we have formed two alternative hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a (Additive model): If shyness and social skills exist in the same continuum and are additive, we predicted that group A would have the best performance, followed by groups B and C, and group D would perform the worst.

Hypothesis 2b (Congruence is better): Children might feel more self-assured and at ease if they are in the optimal or adverse group, compared with being in the incongruent groups. Consequently, groups A and D should perform better than groups B and C.

This investigation is based on four waves of mother-child dyads from a longitudinal adoption study, the Early Growth and Development Study (Leve et al., 2019; N = 361, 57.3% males) when adopted children were 4.5, 6, 7, and 11 years old.

### Preliminary Findings

Profiles of Shyness and Social Skills. As expected, the cluster analysis revealed four groups: a) optimal group: n = 110; b) incongruent-alloof group: n = 78; c) incongruent-social group: n = 32; and d) adverse group: n = 43.

Profiles and Developmental Outcomes. Results from a series of ANOVA showed that at age 6, the incongruent-alloof group felt lonelier and more dissatisfied with their social life compared with the optimal group ( $t(141) = 1.75, p < .05$ ). The adverse group reported more worries and somatic complaints compared with both the optimal ( $t(152) = .88, p < .05$ ) and the incongruent-alloof group ( $t(120) = .87, p < .05$ ). At age 11, the incongruent-alloof group reported higher levels of peer victimization ( $t(187) = 1.67, p < .05$ ) compared with the optimal group. Collectively, group differences in long-term socioemotional outcomes indicated that the incongruent-alloof group demonstrated more interpersonal problems than the optimal group, such as more peer victimization and dissatisfaction with social interactions, but appeared normal in feelings of worry and anxiety. Implications for intervention and future research will be discussed.

### Biography

Jing is a fifth year doctoral candidate who received her M.S.Ed in Interdisciplinary Studies of Human Development and Educational Statistics at the University of Pennsylvania. She received her B.A. in English Translation and Interpretation in Shandong University in China. Jing is interested in looking at how marital relationships and parenting influence the development of internalizing psychopathology in children and adolescents, especially during puberty. She is also interested in cross-culture differences in the trajectories of these developments, and hopes to communicate her findings to a wider audience through cross-cultural research. In her spare time, Jing enjoys cycling, and exploring places on a bike. She cycled for more than 2000 miles across China within a month, and hopes to cycle across the United States in the near future.

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