

### Abstract

The current research consisted of two studies exploring various psychological factors that relate to self-consciousness among college students. Results demonstrated that shyness, boredom, locus of control, and loneliness were significantly related to self-consciousness, but only fear of rejection uniquely predicted self-consciousness in both studies. Future research should continue to explore the relationship between psychological well-being and self-consciousness among college students.

### Introduction

Self-consciousness is a highly studied construct in research that can appear in social and private settings, such as when engaging in social media. Private self-consciousness is related to being introspective and introverted; having an attraction to fantasy, a weak need to be with others, and a self-description of being warm and complicated (Klonsky et al., 1990). Increased levels of public self-consciousness are linked to increased use of assertive self-presentation tactics, such as ingratiation and self-promotion (Hart et al., 2019). The current study explored various psychological factors that relate to self-consciousness among college students.

In a series of studies, we explored the extent to which multiple factors relate to self-consciousness among college students.

In Study 1, participants were asked to complete a survey that assessed their self-consciousness, proneness to boredom, and fear of rejection.

In Study 2, participants were asked to complete a survey that assessed their self-consciousness, proneness to boredom, fear of rejection, locus of control, loneliness, shyness, and need for cognition.

### STUDY 1:

#### Method

This study consisted of 37 female and 7 male participants (Mean age = 18.7,  $SD = 0.9$ ) from Quinnipiac University's Psychology department participant pool. Each participant received course credit in their psychology classes.

Participants were first asked to read and sign a consent form to participate in this study. Then, they completed the following measures, as well as a separate demographic questionnaire, and returned them to one of the four researchers present. The participants completed the questionnaire in person inside a classroom at the university. Once finished, each participant was given a debriefing form detailing more information on the study and thanked for their participation.

#### Measures

**Self-Consciousness.** Participants' awareness of their own behavior through introspection and while around others was assessed using the Self-Consciousness Scale (Scheier, & Carver, 2013;  $\alpha=.76$ ; 16 items; e.g., I'm always trying to figure myself out.).

**Boredom.** Participants' ability to focus during situations that are repetitious and lack external stimulation was assessed using the Boredom Proneness Scale (Farmer & Sundberg, 1986;  $\alpha=.74$ ; 28 items; e.g., It is easy for me to concentrate on my activities.).

**Fear of Rejection.** Participants' feelings of panic related to possibly being not accepted in social situations or groups was assessed using the RSQ/RS-Personal scale (Downey & Feldman, 2013;  $\alpha=.77$ ; 18 items; e.g., You ask someone in class if you can borrow his/her notes.).

#### Results

A series of bivariate correlations were conducted to explore the associations of self-consciousness with boredom and fear of rejection. Results demonstrated that self-consciousness was positively correlated with both boredom ( $r=.40, p=.004$ ) and fear of rejection ( $r=.30, p=.027$ ).

Multiple regression analyses was conducted with boredom and fear of rejection predicting self-consciousness. The multiple regression analysis demonstrated that both boredom ( $\beta=.40, p=.006$ ) and fear of rejection ( $\beta=.30, p=.033$ ) uniquely predicted self-consciousness.

### STUDY 2:

#### Method

This study consisted of 56 female and 35 male participants (Mean age = 19.3,  $SD = 4.1$ ) from Quinnipiac University's Psychology department participant pool. Each participant received course credit in their psychology classes.

The procedure for Study 2 was the same as Study 1, except for the additional self-report measures (see below).

#### Measures

**Self-Consciousness.** As in Study 1, the Self-Consciousness Scale (Scheier, & Carver, 2013;  $\alpha=.74$ ; 16 items) was used.

**Fear of Rejection.** As in Study 1, the RSQ/RS-Personal scale (Downey & Feldman, 2013;  $\alpha=.76$ ; 18 items) was used.

**Boredom.** As in Study 1, the Boredom Proneness Scale (Farmer & Sundberg, 1986;  $\alpha=.83$ ; 28 items) was used.

**Locus of Control.** Participant's internal awareness of people's adaptive sense of control over personal circumstances was assessed using the Multidimensional Locus of Control Scales (Levenson, 1973,  $\alpha=.65$ , 24 items; e.g., My life is chiefly controlled by powerful others.).

**Loneliness.** Participant's feelings of remoteness and isolation from others was assessed using the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell et al., 1978;  $\alpha=.97$ ; 20 items; e.g., I am unhappy doing so many things alone.).

**Shyness.** Participants having emotions related to the feeling of tension and awkwardness in the presence of others and fear or avoidance of group settings was assessed using the Shyness Scale (McCroskey & Richmond, 1982;  $\alpha=.90$ ; 14 items; e.g., I am a shy person.).

**Need for Cognition.** Participant's tendency to engage in and enjoy thinking was assessed using the Need for Cognition Scale (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982;  $\alpha=.67$ , 44 items; e.g., I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems.).

#### Results

A series of bivariate correlations were conducted to explore the associations of self-consciousness with boredom, fear of rejection, locus of control, loneliness, shyness, and need for cognition. Results demonstrated that self-consciousness was positively correlated with fear of rejection ( $r=.33, p=.001$ ), locus of control ( $r=.22, p=.021$ ), and loneliness ( $r=.18, p=.048$ ); negatively correlated with shyness ( $r=-.22, p=.019$ ); but not with boredom ( $r=.10, p=.165$ ) or need for cognition ( $r=.07, p=.249$ ).

Multiple regression analyses was conducted with boredom, fear of rejection, locus of control, loneliness, shyness, and need for cognition predicting self-consciousness. The multiple regression analyses demonstrated that only fear of rejection ( $\beta=.32, p=.006$ ) uniquely predicted self-consciousness.

### Discussion

Across two studies, we found significant psychological factors that relate to self-consciousness among college students. Even though locus of control, loneliness, shyness, and boredom (only in Study 1) were found to be significantly related to self-consciousness, only fear of rejection uniquely predicted self-consciousness in both studies. These results are consistent with the description that people who are more self-consciousness are more introverted (Klonsky et al., 1990) and use ingratiation self-presentation tactics (Hart et al., 2019). Furthermore, fear of rejection uniquely predicting self-consciousness is consistent with research demonstrating that individuals who experience greater levels of self-consciousness consequently seem to experience a number of other issues including anxious and depressive thoughts along with feeling alone when compared to individuals who are not self-conscious (Bowker & Rubin, 2010). Future research should continue to explore the relationship between psychological well-being and self-consciousness.

### References

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