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Trouble in River City: Shame and Anger in Chronic Shyness

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ABSTRACT

Clinical observation of shy patients suggests that chronically shy people blame themselves for perceived inadequacy, but blame others for indifference or a predatory orientation. Other-blaming tendencies suggest the presence of anger as well as shame in chronic shyness. To test this hypothesis in a sample of patients presenting to our shyness clinic, other-blame was measured by the Paranoia Scale (*Pa*) of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). The presence of anger was assessed using three MMPI scales: Psychopathic Deviance (*Pd*) for resentment, Anger (ANGER) and Overcontrolled Hostility (O-H). These were correlated with scores on two shame scales, the Personal Feelings Questionnaire (PFQ) and the Test of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA). Scores on blame, shame and anger were then used to predict the degree of elevation on four Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory Scales: Social Avoidance, Self-abasement, Self-defeating Behavior and Passive-Aggressiveness. Shame was a significant predictor of elevated scores on the Social Avoidance, Self-abasement, Self-defeating Behavior and Passive-Aggressiveness scales. Resentment was a significant predictor of Self-Abasement, and ANGER was a significant predictor of passive aggression. Suppressed hostility was a significant negative predictor of Self-Abasement. Those diagnosed with Avoidant Personality Disorder scored significantly higher than the rest of the sample in other-blaming and shame.