Exploring the effect of non-verbal drama activities on shyness with a focus on the behavioural component

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EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF NON-VERBAL DRAMA ACTIVITIES ON SHYNESS
WITH A FOCUS ON THE BEHAVIOURAL COMPONENT

Ariadni Chona-Rouvali

This exploratory study attempted to observe the behavioural characteristics of shyness of participants with some level of shyness who took part in a set of group drama activities. There was also interest to see if the more shy participants would achieve relaxation and self-expression. The Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness scale was administered to 20 individuals in order to measure shyness. A thematic content analysis was performed on data from open-ended questions. Out of the study’s sample there were no participants scoring high on the shyness scale causing difficulties to draw conclusions. There were some indications that more shy people were able to express themselves as they perform drama activities while interacting with others. Nevertheless the findings were difficult to evaluate since the way more shy were divided from the less shy participants was not solid.

Den här undersökningen eftersträvade att observera känslan blyghet med avseende på beteendeuttryck, hos deltagare med någon nivå av blyghet. Deltagarna var med i en uppsättning av grupp drama aktiviteter. Det fanns också intresse för att se om de blygare deltagarna skulle få avslappning och personligt uttryck. ”The Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness scale” applicerades på 20 individer för att kunna mäta blygheten. En tematisk innehållsanalys utfördes på data från öppna frågor. Undersökningen har visat att det inte fanns några deltagare som fick höga poäng på blyghetsskalan, vilket ledde till svårigheter att dra slutsatser. Det fanns vissa indikationer på att blygare människor kunde uttrycka sig själva, eftersom de utförde drama aktiviteter samtidigt som interagerar med andra. Ändå var det svårt att bedöma resultaten eftersom stratifieringen mellan de blygare deltagarna och mindre blyga deltagarna var inte helt optimal.

“So many people are shut up tight inside themselves like boxes, yet they would open up, unfolding quite wonderfully, if only you were interested in them.” writes Sylvia Plath (1979). It seems that shyness is quite common, for example, in the United States, the percentage of adults reporting being chronically shy increased from 40% (+/-3) in the early 1970s to 48% (+/- 2) in the 1990s (Henderson, Zimbardo, & Carducci, 2001). Shy people think of their networks as less supportive and less satisfying while they tend to be by themselves or to take part in minimal social encounters (Parrot, 2000). Less social support, more limited friendships networks, and fewer and more passive interactions are more typical to shy people than non shy ones (Jones & Carpenter, 1986). Research suggests that shyness and sociability may contribute to substance use related behaviours among young adults in the US (Santesso, Schmidt, & Fox, 2004). Generally, it is claimed that being shy is experienced as unpleasant (Cowden, 2005). Shy people may face grief and anxiety caused even by simple social encounters (Alm & Frodi, 2008).

The concept of shyness has been conceptualized in many ways, therefore it is hard to be defined. In psychology, research has focused on shyness as a behavioural characteristic for several decades. By an overview of the literature, there are many terms defining shyness that have caused many debates. Among most definitions of shyness, discomfort is presented as a common feature along with the willingness to avoid situations that cause it (Henderson, Gilbert, & Zimbardo, 2014), while all shyness definitions include the fear of
novel social interactions (Bešić, 2009). Shy people tend to avoid social interactions while they are inclined to fail to participate appropriately in social situations (Pilkonis, 1977b). It is also claimed that they find expressing themselves difficult (Zimbardo & Radl, 1981). They tend to feel tense, awkward or worried during social interactions, particularly with unfamiliar individuals (Cheek, Melchior, & Carpentieri, 1986) or vaguely familiar (Van der Molen, 1990).

The above mentioned characteristics of shyness address the personality trait of shyness which is represented by the three-component model (Crozier, 1990). According to this model, there are three components of shyness that arise in social situations: a somatic, a cognitive and a behavioural component. The somatic component involves having physiological and affective-emotional symptoms while the cognitive one involves thoughts and worries (Cheek & Krasnoperova, 1999). The focus of the thesis will be on the behavioural component which includes quietness, nonverbal behaviour such as gaze aversion, withdrawing from social contacts, and avoiding interaction with others in a variety of occasions, such as being at a party (Cheek & Krasnoperova, 1999). Shy people do not like being the centre of attention according to Alm and Frodi (2008). They also show fewer facial expressions. Moreover, shy individuals keep others at a greater physical distance than do those who are less shy (about 12 inches farther away) and they maintain low speaking voice, and constrained bodily movements, with minimal hand and arm gesturing (Zimbardo, 1977). Inhibited children who were shy and fearful at age 3 grew up to be socially passive, describing themselves as submissive, not fond of leadership roles, and having minimal desire to influence others (Caspi & Silva, 1995).

The majority of the above mentioned characteristics can be considered as nonverbal behaviour often expressed by shy people. Hall, Coats, and LeBeau (2005) reported in their meta-analysis that nonverbal behaviours include the body, head, face, eyes, hands, voice, the interpersonal distance and the angle of orientation, and the ability to express emotions through nonverbal cues. The signals and messages people transmit by nonverbal communication in interpersonal relations is a topic often underestimated (Gheorghiţa, 2012). When people interact with each other, there is a large amount of time in which little or nothing happens in the verbal channel. However, nonverbal communication is present. A basic characteristic of nonverbal communication is that it is always present inside the interpersonal relations and is crucial in the give and take of social interaction. Among the functions that support the utility of nonverbal communication are providing information, regulating interaction, expressing intimacy, exercising influence and managing impressions (Patterson, 2002).

Generally, there are findings that more men label themselves shy than women (Pilkonis, 1977a; Hermann & Betz, 2004) but at the same time other work was unable to identify gender differences regarding either the degree or the prevalence of shyness (Hamer & Bruch, 1994). More notably, there are findings that show gender differences regarding long-term effects of childhood shyness, such as shy women having a lower educational–level than non–shy women and shy men being older when they married and had children compared to non-shy men (Kerr, Lambert, & Bem, 1996). Additionally, there are different consequences of shyness on men and women (Kerr, 2000), since being shy might be more socially acceptable for women than men.
who might feel more pressure to change their behaviours (Kerr, Lambert, Stattin, & Klackenberg-Larsson, 1994).

Attempts have been made to study shyness in different ways, including drama approaches. In the early 1920s, Jacob Levy Moreno founded psychodrama which was based on spontaneous improvisations. During the 1960s, drama therapy focused on the therapeutic potentials of improvisational and spontaneous theatre (Kedem-Tahar & Felix-Kellermann, 1996). Therefore, there have been attempts to use drama, which is the inspiration and the basis of both psychodrama and drama therapy (Kedem-Tahar & Felix-Kellermann, 1996), in the service of psychology. In the middle of the 20th century, humanistic psychology emerged as a different approach from psychoanalysis and behaviourism (Joseph, 2008). It was called the “third force” in American psychology (Poppen, Wandersman, & Wandersman, as cited in Krippner, 1994), and focuses on the belief that life is lived subjectively (Buhler & Allen, 1972). Humanistic therapies include art and drama therapy, Gestalt therapy, psychodrama, transpersonal analysis (Landy, 1997) as well as client-centred therapy (Joseph, 2008).

Creative drama involves informal drama experiences such as tableau, pantomime, improvised skits and stories (Heining & Stillwell, 1974). Socialization is inherent in creative drama (Aykac, 2013), thus it is claimed that participating individuals may acquire experiences in social interaction and encounter outlining situations that they might face in their daily lives (Yassa, 1997). It is always based on improvisation (Ward, 1930) while it is proposed for developing social skills (Courtney, 1995). Creative drama can be applied to all people regardless their educational level and age. It may enable the participants to attain more comfortable self-expression and personal development as a method that is based on game-like activities (Aykac, 2013).

Shaw and Gammage (2011) conducted three training workshops using drama therapy techniques and subsequent conversations with participants on the phenomenon of shame. When the experience of shame is related to trauma, drama therapy can be effective by employing structures as metaphor, narrative, character engagement, text and role play. As participants came in contact with drama therapy structures, they were enabled to experience a level of control and emotional distance standing for experiences that are often beyond words. The participant has the opportunity through drama therapy to be in a place to act like (or imagine the possibility that) he is without shame. If they can first act like it then they can also be it (Shaw & Gammage, 2011). Though shame and shyness are different concepts, they do share some similarities (Bešić, 2009), like blushing as a physical reaction (Pilkonis, 1977b). However, drama techniques have already been applied in the field of shyness itself. Creative drama helps undergraduate students to develop skills such as communication, self-expression and reducing the shyness level (Tanrıseven, as cited in Aykac, 2013). A study of Genç, as cited in Aykac (2013), also points the positive effect of creative drama course on reducing the shyness level of undergraduate students. In particular, this study claimed that developing skills through creative drama such as discussing, criticising, judgment, making decisions independently, taking risk, socialising and communication contributes on reducing the shyness level of undergraduate students. As for the communication, specifically, it is the first objective that the group is supposed to achieve in drama activities (Adıgüzel, as cited in Aykac,
The contribution of creative drama was assessed for the personal development of housewives. It was observed that through games they free themselves from their problems. It was suggested that the environment created by the happy process of game-like activities contributed to the social, cultural and personal development of the participants (Aykac, 2013).

The effect of the environment mentioned above, on shyness might be worth exploring further. The literature on studying shyness in relation to approaches like drama therapy or creative drama is limited. The present study attempts to explore the experiences of individuals related to aspects of the behavioural component of shyness, in a non-verbal context that includes drama activities. A non-verbal context was chosen because in the case of a verbal context, the activities should have been held in English, whereas the participants had different mother tongues. Having to speak in a language, which is not the participants’ first language, might be a stress factor or an obstacle to spontaneous action. In addition, a non-verbal context hasn’t been exclusively studied before. The aim of the study was to try to identify, based on the participants’ own experience, to what extend non-verbal drama activities affect more shy people, focusing on behavioural characteristics. Due to the lack of relevant studies and the short duration of the study it was considered that one should start from the beginning. Therefore, an attempt was made, based on participants’ reports, to: A) Track behavioural aspects of shyness in order to observe how they were displayed during the drama activities. Examples of behavioural aspects of shyness on which attention will be focused are gaze aversion, social withdrawing, not like being the centre of attention, fewer facial expressions, keep others at a greater physical distance, maintain low speaking voice, constrained bodily movements, not fond of leadership roles, B) See if the more shy participants would manage to relax and express themselves in the relatively short amount of time they had to conclude the set of the drama activities.

Method

Participants

The participants were 20 students, included 7 men and 13 women, from a variety of nationalities. They were recruited by volunteer sampling mainly through social media and they had no prior drama experience. As they checked the event on facebook they signed up for a day out of the three days available to them. This way the chance to draw participants was increased. The age range was 18–30 years ($M=23.5$, $SD=3.51$). Among the students that participated were 5 Greeks, 3 French, 2 Japanese, 2 Swedes, 2 Turks, 1 Austrian, 1 Belgian, 1 British/Indian, 1 German, 1 Italian and 1 Spanish.

Measures

The Revised Cheek and Buss scale

To measure shyness, the Revised Cheek and Buss Shyness scale (RCBS), a 13-item measure of shyness (Cheek, 1983) was used. It is based on the original Shyness scale (Cheek & Buss, 1981) consisting of 9 items. A five-point scale (from 1=very uncharacteristic or untrue to 5=extremely characteristic or true) is used in order to answer the items of the scale. A score of 13 indicates the lowest shyness and a score of 65 indicates the highest shyness. The RCBS
An exploratory factor analysis by Hopko et al. (2005) produced a three-factor model, which was used in order to further assist the qualitative analysis. Therefore, apart from the sum of each participant on the RCBS, scores on the questions referring to each factor were calculated. The three factors include General Social Distress (GSD), Stranger Shyness (SS) and Assertiveness Difficulty/Deficit (AD). GSD focuses on the concept of private shyness or the subjective affective and cognitive distress not necessarily observable to others (Pilkonis, 1977a, 1977b; Zimbardo, 1977). The scores can range from 4 to 20. SS assesses experiences of comfort and shyness around strangers and it is relevant to models that present shyness as increased sensitivity to and slowness to habituate to novel situations or behavioral inhibition in unfamiliar contexts (Buss, 1980; Kagan, 1989). The scores can range from 3 to 15. AD includes issues of social distress and social competence corresponding to the concepts of public self-consciousness and public shyness (Buss, 1980; Pilkonis, 1977a, 1977b). The scores can range from 3 to 15.

Open-ended questions questionnaire

Nine open-ended questions were constructed to capture the experiences of the participants on each activity. Examples of these experiences are: how did they act on each activity, how did they see themselves as they were performing each activity, how did they feel performing the activities inside the group, and their feedback. Some examples of the questions that were used are “How did you feel at the activity where you approached a member of the group/being approached by a member of the group?” and “How did you feel when you had to create a frozen image with everyone?”. Open questions were preferred as they allow the participants to response spontaneously (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec, & Vehovar, 2003). A content analysis was decided to analyse the data since it could help discovering and describing the focus of individual and group attention (Weber, 1990) and it could also reduce the data into defined categories so as to better analyse and interpret them (Harwood & Garry, 2003). The focus was on each activity separately so that their responses to each aspect of interaction that may provoke discomfort or comfort can be clearer.

Procedure

Three groups were formed. The first one consisted of 7 participants, the second one consisted of 9 and the third one included 4 participants. For each of the three groups a meeting was held. The attempt was made to have equal settings for every meeting, such as the time and place. Before each meeting, the participants were informed that they were going to participate in a set of activities about social interaction. They were informed that the participation was voluntary and they could leave at any time. The set of the activities lasted between 35 and 40 minutes. In the end, a questionnaire was provided.
Rationale for the selection and ordering of the activities

The activities were ordered based on thinking what is occurring during an interaction and on a way that would make sense to the participants. Specifically, thinking about how people interact, the activities were created trying to reflect the sequence of events in a social interaction. First when an individual meets someone, the physical proximity is one of the first issues. Therefore, after the introduction, the Distance activity was placed. Eye contact is following. This is the reason the “Mirror” activity was placed. After this, people may start talking, so the Instrument-tune activity was next. Exaggeration may come after already knowing a little about the other person and feeling more relaxed. That is why the Dance-freeze activity was put next. Leading was an element present in more than one activities, since the ability or feeling of comfort on taking leadership roles can be observed in the beginning of a new acquaintance and all through the interaction. The Dance-lead activity, which has as a primary purpose to explore the leadership experiences, was placed after the Dance-freeze in order to make more sense to the participants as they both included dance according to music. The Frozen image was placed before the closing activity because it examined the connection and the proximity that was possibly achieved during the previous activities.

The introduction and the closure part of the set of the activities helped facilitating respectively the first contact of the participants and a way to close the meetings harmoniously with some closure. Since they did not focus on some aspect of shyness, the activities used in these parts were not included explicitly in the questionnaire, though there was the option to comment on it on the more general question “Is anything else you want to tell us?”.

A short presentation of the activities in the order they were performed is shown in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Function</th>
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</table>
| **Introduction** | 1. Walking in space and a) shaking the head, b) and smile, c) and handshake, d) and say their name to anyone they come across and freeze when hearing a clap.  
2. In a circle taking deep breaths and performing simple legs’ exercises (like making circles with their foot) | Introductory activity, for a first contact with the other people of the group.  
Concentration-activation of the body |
| **Distance**  | In pairs, participants start approaching each other until one of them (has been decided from before) stops. Second round, different pairs and roles. | Distance  
Lead |
| **Mirror**   | In pairs, one is the model moving parts of the body (hands, legs, e.t.c) and the other is the mirror try to copy the movements by looking only in the model’s eyes. Second round, different roles. | Eye contact  
Lead |
| **Instrument-tune** | In a circle, participants were asked to play their imaginative musical instrument and whispering a tune from a song. Then forming bands and everyone singing louder in order. | Speaking louder |
| **Dance-freeze** | As moving freely/dancing to music, participants were asked to freeze as the music stops to whatever position they are. Instruction for more extreme/extravagant freezing positions. | Body movements |
| **Dance-lead** | Dancing while each one of them comes forward and show a movement while the others follow. | Lead |
| **Frozen image** | As participants hear the following phrases, First time at the university, Let's be friends, Being at a party, they take steady positions forming a frozen image all together. | Connection – proximity to others |
| **Closure**   | 1. By looking at a picture participants try to form a circle similar to the one of the picture and they start moving as listening to music.  
2. Sitting down in a circle participants write in a piece of paper something that they feel the group gave them at the end of the activities. As the papers mixed, participants took one and read it out loud. | A way to close/completed the meeting |
Grouping and analysing shyness

In order to classify the participants as more shy and less shy, the study based its method to the Philips and Bruch’s study (1988), according to which shyness groups were determined based on the median for each gender on the scale. This method of classification is found to be effective in discriminating predicted behavioral correlates of shyness (Cheek & Stahl, 1986). The same kind of categorisation, by using the median, was applied on Alm and Frodi’s qualitative study (2008) so that groups of shy and non-shy people formed. Using the 40th and the 60th percentile as cut-off points has been mentioned by Cheek and Buss (1981) but on their 9-item shyness scale. Azizmohammadi (2013) and Mohammadian (2013) mentioned that Cheek recommended a cut-off point of 39 without the corresponding reference, so it was not considered very reliable. Therefore, in the current study, a mean on the scores on the RCBS was computed for each participant and then the median was checked for each gender. Based on the median, participants scored higher were considered more shy and those who scored lower were considered less shy. Participants, who’s score was the median, were not taken into account.

Participants that would score high on the RCBS were not expected to participate in this study, since it was about social interaction and really shy people tend to avoid interactions with others. Therefore, in this study the participants will be referred to as more or less shy instead of shy and not shy. Additionally, despite that activities were created based on the behavioural component of shyness, it was expected that through analyzing the data, findings about other components of shyness would emerge. Therefore, worries and thoughts of the participants were present in the analysis leading to the cognitive component of shyness.

Content analysis

A thematic content analysis was decided for analysing the data. The theme was the recording unit, meaning the unit of the text that will be categorised (Weber, 1990). A theme refers to something important about the data regarding the research question and indicates some level of a pattern, a recurrent response or meaning within the data being analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis has been suggested for assessing the characteristics or experiences of persons, groups or historical periods (Neuendorf, 2002). Among the objectives of science, that are typically presented, are explanation, control, prediction and description. This is a descriptive content analysis where the conclusions are limited to the content that is being studied (Neuendorf, 2002).

Generally, the process that is suggested for a Content Analytic Research Design is the following: 1) Theory and rationale, 2) Conceptualisations, 3) Operationalisation, 4) Coding schemes, 5) Sampling, 6) Training and pilot reliability, 7) Coding 8) Final reliability, 9) Tabulation and reporting (Neuendorf, 2002). The first step was achieved after the literature review and is shown in the introduction section. Conceptualisations is the step where all the categories and items of measurement were defined. A part of this process can be seen in the introduction, as shyness and its characteristics attempted to be defined and described. Each conceptual definition was used as an index to construct the corresponding measure for that variable, as Conceptualisations and Operationalisation need to match (Neuendorf, 2002).
Operationalisation is the step where measures are being developed. During this step a Coding scheme must be created (Neuendorf, 2002), so these two steps will be discussed together. As these categories were designed, an effort was made to construct exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories. First, there was an attempt to create appropriate codes for all the units being coded and the category «Other» was included so that exhaustive categories could be achieved. Another attempt was made for every unit coded to fit in one appropriate category so that mutually exclusive categories could be achieved. An example can be the category The medium, meaning what was used in order to create or structure the activities, which contained Dance, Music, Imaginative instrument, Singing, Mirror, Other. For open-ended responses “emergent coding” is allowed (Neuendorf, 2002). The term signifies the construction of coding schemes after the collection of all the responses. However, these coding schemes are more idiosyncratic and less validated (Neuendorf, 2002).

During the step Coding scheme, a codebook was created, after repeated reviews, with all the codes explained and instructions for the coding process. The coding form, which provides the space for the process of coding, was complied with the codebook. Both the codebook and the coding form were used as a protocol for the content analysis. It is suggested that, when coding human text, a hard copy may be more effective (Neuendorf, 2002). Therefore, Coding was done manually, followed by reporting the results.

In this study Sampling, Training and pilot reliability and Final reliability were not applied. The data for analysis were not extended, since only 20 questionnaires were collected. Therefore, Sampling, the selection of a subset of units to study, was considered purposeless according to theory (Neuendorf, 2002). The Training and pilot reliability, where during a training session coders work together and find out if they can agree on the coding, as well as the Final Reliability, referring again to the extent of correspondence among coders, were also unachievable since there was only one coder.

Statistical analysis

The SPSS Statistics 20 was used in the statistical analysis of the data. The Mann-Whitney U test was used in order to compare the mean scores on the three factors (GSD, SS, AD) of the RCBS scale between more and less shy groups (men and women) because the data did not follow a normal distribution. An exception was made when comparing means between more and less shy men for the AD factor as the data did follow a normal distribution. Therefore the Student’s t – test was used in this case.

Results

The median for women was 33 and for men 31. The mean on the RCBS scale was 32.6 ($SD=6.28$). The mean on GSD was 10.5 ($SD=2.8$). The mean of the participants on SS was 7.4 ($SD=2.3$) and the mean for the current sample on AD was 6.6 ($SD=1.9$). Notably, being aware of the range of the scores on shyness scale and the three shyness factors mentioned above, no high scores have been found for none of them.

Table 2 demonstrates the mean scores of the more and less shy participants on the three factors. The significance level was taken as .05 in the study. The differences in score between
more and less shy men for the GSD, SS and AD factors were not significant (p= 0.200; 0.400; 0.313 respectively). The scores on the GSD and SS factor, for more shy women (GSD M=13.60, SD=1.67; SS M=9.40, SD=2.07) and less shy women (GSD M=9.17, SD=1.60; SS M=5.50, SD=0.84) were significantly higher for more shy women (p=0.004 for both GSD and SS). The scores between more and less shy women for the AD factor did not differ significantly (p=0.931).

Table 2. The mean scores of the three factors of the RCBS for more and less shy participants divided by gender. The three factors include General Social Distress (GSD), Stranger Shyness (SS) and Assertiveness Difficulty/Deficit (AD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GSD</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>AD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More shy men</td>
<td>11.66(SD=3.05)</td>
<td>8(SD=2.64)</td>
<td>7.33(SD=0.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less shy men</td>
<td>7.33(SD=2.89)</td>
<td>5.67(SD=0.58)</td>
<td>6.00(SD=1.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More shy women</td>
<td>13.60(SD=1.67)</td>
<td>9.40(SD=2.07)</td>
<td>7.20(SD=1.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less shy women</td>
<td>9.17(SD=1.60)</td>
<td>5.50(SD=0.84)</td>
<td>7.17(SD=2.23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presenting the results of content analysis, it is, firstly, noted that almost all participants mention a structural component of activities at least once, “...a chance to dance...”, “...playing musical instrument...”. Participants also argued that it was a new experience for them, “...nothing like what I’ve done before...”, limited reporting the non-verbal context “...for no voice”. Another point that should be made is that almost all participants found at least one activity or the whole experience in general entertaining and capable of provoking positive feelings as feeling happy, relaxed or just good, “I feel relaxed and I had so much fun”, “...sing it was really pleasant”. However, there were enough replies referring to negative feelings, such as embarrassment and mainly discomfort and awkwardness, “...maybe a little embarrassed sometimes”, “Awkward because I couldn’t think...”. The majority of these were changed during the course of activities as it will be discussed. Following these general observations, there are several issues that have risen through the analysis.

Connection to people

Participants frequently expressed that they associated somehow with the other participants. Most of them experienced some closeness to the group, as “...after some activities, there were no borders between the people any more”, “...we got closer each other”. More shy individuals reported a connection to others in the last activity and in the last more abstract question (“Is there anything else you want to tell us?”). Despite the inhibition during social interaction they manage to feel closer to other members of their group after performing the activities. Moreover, the cooperation that took place while carrying the activities out was also reported. Mainly that happened during the last activity where more shy participants stated “It is really amazing how some people can create image... “, “...it was fun to create something together”.

Concern on the others

It is noted that more shy participants had their focus on others as well during the activities. Regarding the Frozen image activity, there will be no comment since seeing the others was part of the activity’s instructions. As for the more shy participants who focused on others
during Dance-Freeze, they found observing others’ postures entertaining. “... funny to see the others”, “Fun to see other people are freezing” were the references of participants who scored 38 and 42 on the Shyness scale. Another finding was the concern if the others see the participant. In particular, they worried about what other people would think about them, “I was worried about what the others would think about when I stopped”, “...afraid when I had to show the movement. I’m afraid people judge me...”, although someone who scored 33 on the Shyness scale stated “I didn’t have problem to show that one (referring to the imaginative instrument and the tune) to the other people in the room”.

Concern on self

Continuing referring to the cognitive aspect of shyness, a lot of participants expressed a preoccupation with themselves about what to do. More shy participants described “Really insecure about what you «should» do”, “Thoughtful about what movement to show first...” while a negative self-evaluation was also expressed, “...I don’t have a good voice”, “I’m not so good at dancing”.

Expression – Imagination

More shy individuals reported that they felt they expressed themselves “...I felt free to dance much in the way I wanted”, they felt being creative, “Very creative...”, and they acted upon their imagination, “I felt I’m on a stage”.

It is noted that among them there were those who reported exaggeration of expression. They mentioned “I wanted also to be frozen in a non-normal position”, “I wanted to do crazy things...”. Only one, after he shared that he wanted to exaggerate, he described at the next activity, Dance-lead, that “...I didn’t want to do weird or difficult things”.

Control-Lead

Findings were controversial in this area. Participants being classified as more shy, expressed their difficulty being in the lead as “...it was a bit «harder» being the model (in the Mirror activity where the model is the one that leads the mirror)...”, “Mirror: in control, Model: hesitant, waiting for mirror”. On the other hand, less shy participants expressed enjoying being the one leading, “It was really funny being able to decide what moves I wanted the other person to do”, “I felt good. I controlled someone’s movement! Was enjoyable”. However, less frequently, this enjoyment of the leading role is present to more shy individuals as well. “...when I am model I wanted to do crazy things”, in activities where leadership roles are clearly distributed by the instructions of the activity itself. In activities where there was no such an instruction, there is no clear evidence of the participants’ experience except from one participant who claimed that “During the last dance group (with the linked hands) I felt more following others than express myself”.

Switch on feelings

Participants changed their perception and feelings during the activities. Among them there was not much difference between participants with lower and higher level of shyness. More shy individuals reported that the beginning was uncomfortable for them, as “...in the
beginning was a bit strange”, “But at first it was embarrassing”, “The first time... was also awkward” but as proceeding, the feelings turned around, “Then I felt just more relaxed...”, “I just went with the flow afterwards”. Similar responses were given by the less shy participants, “At the start I was stress”, “I felt embarrassed when we started”, “At first I feel like I was shy but after a while it was fun to approach each other”.

New acquaintance

More shy participants mentioned the fact that they were among unfamiliar people. “...what is possible if some random people come together...”, “...I ashamed being group with someone that I don’t know...” were among the given responses, showing that sometimes being among strangers could cause some discomfort. However, one more shy participant, that scored 33 on the Shyness scale, claimed “I don’t have any problem to meet new people”.

Distance

More shy participants were the ones who commented the most on distance during the first activity after the introduction. Being uncomfortable getting close was mentioned, “...not surprised having to stop too soon”, but so were just some general comments, such as “...you think you’re far away but then suddenly you end up really close”, while there was a wish for more proximity as well, “The member could be more close each other”. In this case the scores on Stranger Shyness scale seem rather relevant and hence are reported. Regarding the first example, the participants scored 10 on the Stranger Shyness factor. However, the rest scored lower on the same factor, such as 7 or 5. Two participants, whose total sum on shyness was the median and who also expressed a discomfort on close distance, scored 9 and 10 regarding the Stranger Shyness, higher than those who classified as more shy based on the total sum of the scale. “...I had a really huge group member as a partner, and I felt a bit uncomfortable approaching him...the gap between us was too small”, “It was intense when we came too close” were their responses.

Eye contact

Only one among the participants who remarked on eye contact during the Mirror activity was considered more shy. She replied twice “...a little bit shy and stress when...look people I don’t know in their eyes”, “I felt uncomfortable to look my partner in the eyes because I didn’t know him”, and she was the shyest individual of the sample. Less shy participants focused on the difficulty to constantly looking to their partners’ eyes, “It was difficult to continue looking at the other’s person eyes”, while someone reported that “...it’s difficult to guess movements just with the eyes”. Less shy people seem to focus on the difficulty of the task itself though a more shy individual express difficulty to look to a stranger’s eyes.

Singing-raising the voice

More shy participants reported having problems regarding the activity Instrument-tune. Despite some general issues, like “...making sounds in the beginning was a bit strange”, and some reluctance about singing due to negative self-evaluation, “While I was singing a tune I ashamed since I don’t have a good voice”, there was also a report about the discomfort of
raising her voice, “I felt relax except when I had to sing a little bit louder”. The last comment was made by the shyest individual of the sample. It is worth mentioning that among the replies of less shy participants, “no shame for...sing”, “I felt very comfortable and happy...to sing...”, there was also the reference of experiencing discomfort while raising the voice, “...didn’t want to sing louder than the other band members”. This participant though being considered less shy, he scored 10 on Stranger Shyness factor.

Discussion
The aim of the study was to explore and describe the effect of non-verbal dramatic activities on more shy individuals, based on the participants’ perspective. The interest was focused on, but not limited to, the behavioural component of shyness. The observation of how it was displayed in the drama activities context was the first objective of the study. The opportunity of more shy people to relax and express themselves was explored as well.

The more shy women included in this study scored significantly higher on the GSD and SS factors of the RCBS scale than the less shy ones, this is not the case for the AD factor. The significant differences indicate that the groups (more and less shy) for women actually differ when it comes to these factors. Regarding the men, no significant differences were found between the more and less shy groups for all of the three factors. The sample size of women (twice as large as that of men) could explain why significant differences were found for women for the GSD and SS factor, but not for men. The non-significant findings indicate that the perception that the more and less shy groups in the content analysis differ is wrong. Therefore, the results from the content analysis should be read with caution. It is interesting that, for the AD factor, no significant difference was found between the more and less shy groups for both the men and women. Possibly this factor is less related to shyness than the other two factors. This suggestion is supported by Hopko et al. (2005). After they confirmed the stability of the three-factor model, they performed bivariate correlations with other self-report measures of shyness. The AD factor associated less strongly with the other measures of shyness. Therefore, they suggested that compared to the other two factors, the AD factor may be less important for conceptualizing shyness.

Participants referred to the atmosphere as capable of provoking positive feelings and enjoyable. It seems that the intention to create a pleasant environment with game-like activities was accomplished. A switch on the mood was also noted. Participants, who experienced some negative feelings or discomfort, later reported more relaxing and positive feelings. More shy participants referred to the fact that they were among unfamiliar people, expressing sometimes discomfort. It seems though that in the end, more shy individuals managed to feel some closeness to the other members of their group. Shy people are expected to be inhibited with unfamiliar people but relaxation and cooperation with others, provoked by creative drama/game-like activities, might help them feeling some intimacy towards others. More shy participants also claimed that they expressed themselves. The nature of the activities, meaning the creativity and the feeling of play, might facilitate shy people self-expression and even help them to loose their constrained body movements. These findings are in line with the Brookdale Drama Project (Polsky, as cited in Davis, 1987), a programme for older adults, based
exclusively on creative drama, in which an increase of self-expression and relaxation were among typical observations.

More shy participants did not feel comfortable assuming leadership as expected from the theory that shy people are not keen in leadership roles. However, being the leader did not seem to be a problem when there are instructions that distribute the roles. In a structured context, a shy person may be more comfortable assuming leadership. It is shown that when there is a structured script, shy people experience lower social anxiety and enhanced confidence (Leary, Kowalski, & Bergen, 1988), whereas the lack of guidance can cause them to feel nervous (Alm & Frodi, 2008). Providing a script could be of benefit not only for assuming leadership but throughout the whole set of activities which was designed to include clear, detailed instructions.

Though more shy participants mentioned being uncomfortable to get physically closer to other people, a wish for more proximity was also reported. In this case, the low scoring (5) on the Stranger Shyness factor may be an explanation. This could be supported by a reverse observation. Participants who scored the median on total Shyness, and therefore weren’t classified as more shy, but relatively high on Stranger Shyness (9 and 10), still expressed discomfort for the close distance. Therefore, it seems that feeling uncomfortable at a close distance with a new acquaintance depends more on the specific fear for the unfamiliar acquaintance, thus the factor of Stranger Shyness, and not on shyness in general. Regarding eye contact and raising the voice, only the shyest participant of the sample mentioned having difficulties. An assumption could be made that one should experience higher level of shyness in order to demonstrate these behavioural characteristics. Specifically for hesitating to raise the voice, the experiences of comfort and shyness around strangers may also play a role, since a less shy participant, scoring high on the Stranger Shyness scale (10), also felt uncomfortable raising his voice. However, since singing a tune was required for this activity, this may be a factor that stressed the participants as «singing well» might cross their minds. Therefore, it might not be a matter of raising their voice.

More shy participants mentioned that they turn their attention to other members (as mentioned before, the comments of Frozen image activity were not considered) even though they had some of the highest scores on the Shyness Scale of the sample. This contradicts the notion of shy people that they do not pay attention to others (Cheek & Melchior, 1990). The structure of the activity Dance-Freeze, asking people to “freeze”, might intrigue the participants’ curiosity. It is interesting that they started to observe the others even though the instructions of the activity did not ask for it. The focus on other people has been suggested to reduce shyness in a previous study (Alm & Frodi, 2008). At the same time, more shy participants worried about what the others might think of them which is in accordance with shyness theory (Zimbardo, 1977). Self-preoccupation, such as worrying what to do, and negative self-evaluation were also reported by more shy participants. These findings agree with previous studies who showed that shy people spent more time self-focusing during an interaction with a stranger than non-shy individuals (Cheek & Melchior, 1990) and that they lack confidence in their own behaviour and make a negative self-evaluation during social situations (Zhao, Kong, & Wang, 2012).
Reflecting on the results, it seems that the cognitive aspects of shyness that more shy participants mentioned, with one exception of observing the others, were reported as expected, without any change. Pre-occupation, self-negative evaluation and worry of the others negative evaluation were expressed as it was anticipated for more shy individuals. The same cannot be argued for the behavioural aspects of shyness, although one should not overlook that a shy person does not have to experience all the negative aspects of shyness. Assuming leadership spontaneously remained a problem for more shy individuals except if there was instruction of assuming leadership. Though most more shy participants felt uncomfortable to come closer with other people, eye contact and speaking louder did not seem to be an issue, for anyone classified as more shy but the shyest individual of the sample. This can insinuate that gaze aversion and the maintenance of low speaking voice describe people who experience shyness more intensely. Another finding was that the Stranger Shyness factor may be a more suitable way than the total score on RCBS to study some behaviours related to shyness, such as keeping distance with unfamiliar people and speaking low. Generally, keeping in mind that shy people have been described as “tense, awkward or worried during social interactions, particularly with unfamiliar individuals” (Cheek, Melchior, & Carpentieri, 1986), it is quite interesting that more shy participants in the study did manage to relax, enjoy, connect with others and express themselves.

However, there is a legitimate question if what was observed was shyness and not embarrassment or shame. There have been some difficulties to adopt criteria in order to decide if shyness is distinct from embarrassment and shame since they do share some similarities, such as, among others, self-consciousness (Crozier, 1990). It is claimed that it is rare to experience "pure" emotions. It is typical to experience a combination of emotions in response to everyday events, even though a particular emotion may be dominant (Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996). For example, shy people report greater embarrassment in social situations than non-shy individuals (Crozier, 2001). And shyness, shame and embarrassment are closely associated phenomena (Miller, 1995; Hofmann, Moscovitch, & Kim, 2006). However, shame can occur after a failure to an achievement-related task, hurting another person’s feelings, and failing to act according to personal ideals and it most frequently occurs among friends/familiar people (Tangney et al., 1996). On the other hand, it is harder to rule out embarrassment which is more likely to take place in the presence of strangers and acquaintances (Tangney et al., 1996) and because the most commonly used embarrassment induction task includes, among others, asking the participants to sing a song (Drummond, 1997; Drummond and Mirco, 2004; Gerlach, Wilhelm, Gruber, & Roth, 2001). It remains uncertain whether the findings are related to shyness or whether they are related to other related constructs. However a broadly used shyness measurement was used (RCBS) and the activities were created to target specific behavioural aspects of shyness, where some of them, appeal to shame and embarrassment as well. Nevertheless, due to the valid measurement, it is believed that the relaxation, the ability to express oneself, and the integration which were also the question of the study, are findings related to more shy people.

Supporting the shyness-inducing situation, less shy people also stated that they experienced feelings of shyness (or embarrassment). This observation probably points to the state of shyness as it can be experienced due to the occasion and not because of a personal
characteristic. A lot of people can occasionally experience shyness as a study shows where over 90 percent of college students considered that they have felt shy at some time in their lives (Zimbardo, Pilkonis, & Norwood, 1975).

This study has certain limitations, starting from the main subject of the study, the shyness. The most essential problem is the way of grouping the participants into more or less shy. Without a cut-off point to show a clinical idea to some extent on how high a shy person scores, it is rather difficult to evaluate the results and any attempt to make an assumption about them is questionable. It is hard to understand the level of shyness when it has an effect, according to participants’ reports, on the behaviours being studied. When individuals within the same group, who scored close to the median, reveal different issues, it is challenging to draw conclusions or offer some interpretation since participants can and did score similarly and there was not any validated cut-off point. Additionally, as was expected, there were no really shy people in this study. This is probably due to the fact that the standout characteristic of the activities was interaction, which shy people tend to avoid. Another issue can be that as people realise that the questionnaire is about shyness they may tend to adjust their answers so they avoid the characterization of “being shy”, assuming that this indicates a negative or dysfunctional trait according to Western culture at least (Chen et al., 1998). This lack of really shy participants is a serious limitation to the study since the study’s main interest was shy individuals.

Content analysis, as it was conducted in this study, has a few limitations, including that it cannot clearly demonstrate the difference between the two groups. A quantitative design might be more appropriate for that purpose. But the aim of the current study was to capture the individual’s experience as much as possible instead of comparing shy versus non-shy people (or men and women or any other possible comparison). Nevertheless, some findings from the less shy participants were mentioned when they added information to better understand the target group of the study (the more shy individuals) or when they were considered unexpected. A qualitative design was decided since it contributes to understand the participants’ perspective of the actions, experiences, situations and events that they are engaged in. Participants’ perspective refers to, among others, intention, affect, and cognition. A qualitative study helps to see how the context within which the participants act has an effect on their actions (Maxwell, 2013). Davis (1985) used content analysis to monitor the emotional states of older adults after an 18-session creative drama workshop.

To assess the trustworthiness of a qualitative study it is common to use Guba’s (1981) constructs that includes credibility (as an alternative to internal validity), transferability (as an alternative to external validity/generalisability), dependability (as an alternative to reliability), and confirmability (as an alternative to objectivity). Despite some objections, Guba’s constructs are widely accepted (Shenton, 2004). However, Neudendorf (2002) assesses the results of content analysis by using the terms used by a quantitative approach. Neudendorf’s way was used to assess the trustworthiness of this study, since her theory was the basis of this study content analysis. The study has a low validity and reliability. In general, the small sample size potentially made the sample not representative, thus making the results less reliable. The sample consisted exclusively of students so it cannot be considered
representative leading to a low external validity. As for the internal validity, the conceptual definition of behavioural aspects of shyness matched the operationalisation. Regarding reliability limitations, re-coding at a different time was not possible due to the short length of the study. Having only one coder is an additional limitation. For these reasons, it is not known if the results would have been the same on repeated trials as reliability suggests (Neuendorf, 2002). Therefore, the reliability of this study is low. To sum up, the study has some serious limitations regarding its trustworthiness.

The method of the sampling, the volunteering sampling, could pose a problem regarding the representativeness of the participants (e.g. They might be more motivated to participate in a study or people who do not use facebook did not have the chance to participate). The sample of the study is biased since the amount of the Greeks participants is considerably larger than the other nationalities. In addition, potential data could be missed out on because the first activity was not monitored. Whereas according to Kagan and Fox (2006), shyness is often expressed during the first contact with strangers. Furthermore, some factors that might have an effect on participants could not be measured or handled in this study. These factors can be the physical environment where the meetings took place such as the room and the light. Additionally, some circumstantial factors could not be controlled in the study, such as the composition of the group that the participants happened to be and the person who paired with during the activities. In other words, the people that a participant interacted with may have an impact on him/her that could not be estimated. It is important to mention that some of the participants already knew each other. Letting the conductor of the meetings indicate how the pairs will be formed, was decided to make sure that the participants would interact with someone not familiar. The conductor should also be a subject of criticism. From the first meeting to the second and the third it is possible to get used to it and be more comfortable. Some unnoticed changes on behalf of the conductor such as tiredness due to the repetition might also take place. Another issue that should be considered is the different size of the first two groups and the third one. The third group contained just 4 people contrary to 7 and 9 people that the first and second group had respectively. This could have an impact on the participants. For example being together with three people instead of six can be more comfortable. An analysis based on the differences between the three groups of the study was not conducted, something that should be considered for future reference.

In future attempts to study the concept of shyness through drama, adding secondary sources as a way to measure shyness may provide more complete and accurate data. Peer ratings as to how shy would peers describe the participant can be of value and considered together with self-reports measures. Quite a few studies concerning shyness have used both measurements (Paulhus & Trapnell, 1998; Alm & Frodi, 2008), though due to the short time frame, it was not possible in this study. Peer ratings can possibly address the problem of people avoiding the “shy” characterisation by setting their answers accordingly. The current study focused on the subjective experience of the participants. It was based exclusively on what participants reported and how they perceived the drama activities and themselves performing them. Therefore, adding one observer may contribute to a more complete analysis. The observations could provide a wider picture of the participants, how they interacted, how they looked in each activity, were they stressed, were they relaxed and loose, etc. Having videotaped the meeting,
so it can be analysed thoroughly later might also be an idea. Although knowing that they were videotaped, could be an additional stress factor for shy participants. A discrete observer could possibly cause stress but perhaps less intense than a recording camera.

One basic component of the drama activities is that they were non-verbal. Participants did not comment on it a lot. If verbal drama activities could affect more shy people in a more favorable way, it is something to be considered for future research. However a non-verbal context might be useful to settings like the current when there are people from many different linguistic backgrounds. Non-verbal drama activities can be applied when the target group is immigrants for example. Another application is possible regarding individuals with some level of language impairments. All the above can be explored further. Reflecting on the differences between shy people’s behaviour, future studies can target shy extroverts. Shy extroverts are generally outgoing and behave in a sociable manner but they suffer from negative self-evaluation and anxiety (Henderson et al., 2001). It might be interesting to focus on the effect of drama activities on these characteristics for this specific group of shy people. Future research could also explore the effect of drama activities on the cognitive aspects of shyness which were apparent in this study. Future attempts to study shyness related to drama activities may direct attention to improve social skills. Emphasis on social skills in shyness may have a beneficial therapeutic outcome (Miller, 1995). To employ creative drama as a tool to achieve this goal can be suggested since it is widely accepted that it is a method of developing skills (Courtney, 1995).

Conclusion

This study did not manage to draw very reliable conclusions. However, as mentioned before, some encouraging findings may serve as an indication, along with the few studies that studied shy people using theatrical activities, that further research could be suggested. Perhaps, a setting that uses these kinds of activities may help more shy individuals to further increase their self-awareness and improving their social skills. Trower, as cited in Cappe and Alden, 1986 (p.796), claimed that “social interaction is a fluid, ongoing process that requires monitoring of one’s partner’s behavior and synchronization of one’s own behavior with that of one’s partner”. This definition seems likely to evoke the mirror activity when one has to see what his/her partner does and tries to copy it, synchronise his/her body with that of the partner’s. Therefore, future research may help answering if a similar theatrical context can help a more shy individual to partially overcome his shyness and can be used as a tool to other forms of psychotherapies.
References


