**Introduction**

Previous research suggests a link between higher social anxiety and gaze aversion (Horley et al., 2004; Hietanen et al., 2008) yet this has been difficult to capture in observational studies (e.g., Walters & Hope, 1998).

**Method**

Participants completed a self-report packet and a social interaction with another participant.

**Results**

Higher social anxiety related to less eye contact by self- and partner-report.

**Discussion**

Individuals with higher social anxiety make less eye contact during a casual conversation and this is detected by conversation partners.

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**Abstract**

**Introduction**

- Evidence for relationship between gaze aversion and social anxiety from eyetracking and brain imaging studies (Horley et al., 2004; Moukheiber et al., 2010).
- Behavioral observation studies have produced mixed results (Farabee et al., 1993; Walters & Hope, 1998; Weeks et al., 2011).

The Gaze Aversion Rating Scale (GARS; Schneier et al., 2011) was created to measure gaze aversion within social anxiety.

Previous research indicates gender differences in eye contact (Exline et al., 1965).

In the current study we:

- Tested the relationship between social anxiety and self- and partner-report of eye contact during two short social interactions.
- Tested the predictive validity of the GARS.

**Hypotheses**

- Higher social anxiety and higher GARS scores will relate to lower levels of eye contact by self- and partner-report.
- Gender differences in eye contact.

**Participants**

- Participants were 127 undergraduates at Washington University. Majority were:
  - Women (n = 79; 63.2%)
  - White (n = 73; 59.3%)
  - Mean age of 18.92 (SD = 1.74)

**Discussion**

- Found support for an association between social anxiety and self-report of overall eye contact and partner-report of overall eye contact.
- Predictive validity of GARS partially supported.
- Both the GARS and the SIAS were related to the partner's liking.
- Women reported more eye contact than men.
- Self-report of gaze anxiety and avoidance may relate more strongly to eye contact behavior when two women interact compared to two men or mixed gender.
- Next steps:
  - Use independent observer coding of eye contact.
  - Investigate influence of different types of interactions or partners.

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**Measures**

**Straightforward Social Interaction Anxiety Scale** (S-SIAS; Mattick & Clarke, 1998; Rodebaugh et al., 2004)

- 20-item measure of anxiety across a variety of social situations.

**Gaze Aversion Rating Scale** (GARS; Schneier et al., 2011)

- 34-item measure of amount of anxiety and avoidance related to eye contact across various situations.
- 17 situations; anxiety and avoidance subscales highly correlated ($r = .68, p < .001$).
- Similar format to Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale.

**Post-task Questionnaire**

- 17-item measure of eye contact for self and partner.
- Assessed with three questions: overall, first interaction, and second interaction.
- Also assessed perceptions of the partner.

**Procedure**

- Two participants per session.
- Participants completed self-report questionnaires.
- Participants completed two 5 minute get-to-know-you conversations with each other.
- Eye contact was manipulated through instructions at halfway point.
- Rated self and partner's eye contact.
- Due to the interdependency in the dataset, analyses focus on one participant from each dyad.

**Results: Gender Differences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self-report</th>
<th>Partner-report</th>
<th>Report on partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M = 4.88</td>
<td>M = 4.46*</td>
<td>M = 4.52*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD = 1.31</td>
<td>SD = 1.30</td>
<td>SD = 1.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M = 5.23</td>
<td>M = 5.38*</td>
<td>M = 5.44*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD = 1.03</td>
<td>SD = 1.15</td>
<td>SD = .96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Significant difference, $p < .01$

**Results: Intercorrelations among Eye Contact and Social Anxiety**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GARS</th>
<th>S-SIAS</th>
<th>EC SR</th>
<th>EC SR 1st</th>
<th>EC SR 2nd</th>
<th>EC PR</th>
<th>EC PR 1st</th>
<th>EC PR 2nd</th>
<th>KB PR</th>
<th>L PR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GARS</strong></td>
<td>.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>S-SIAS</strong></td>
<td>.67**</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC SR</strong></td>
<td>-.28**</td>
<td>-.37**</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC SR 1st</strong></td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC SR 2nd</strong></td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>.81**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EC PR</strong></td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EC PR 1st</strong></td>
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<td>-.14</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EC PR 2nd</strong></td>
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<td>.26**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.66***</td>
<td>.19</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KB PR</strong></td>
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<td>-.34***</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.28**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L PR</strong></td>
<td>-.30**</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.77***</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: GARS = Gaze Aversion Rating Scale; S-SIAS = Straightforward Social Interaction Anxiety Scale; EC SR = overall eye contact self-report; EC SR 1st = eye contact self-report in first interaction; EC SR 2nd = eye contact self-report in second interaction; EC PR = overall eye contact partner's rating; EC PR 1st = eye contact partner rating in first interaction; EC PR 2nd = eye contact partner rating in second interaction; KB PR = want to get to know better partner's rating; L PR = liking partner's rating. Internal consistency is listed on the diagonal. *p < .10; **p < .05; ***p < .01. As hypothesized; Against hypothesis.

**Results: Gender Differences**

- Found support for an association between social anxiety and self-report of overall eye contact and partner-report of overall eye contact.
- Predictive validity of GARS partially supported.
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