Interpersonal Sensitivities Prospectively Predict Aversive Reactions to Social Stressors in Daily Life

Kylie J. Fraga, Tilda Cvrkel & Thane M. Erickson

SEATTLE PACIFIC

Introduction

- Research has shown that some social behaviors might be generally and predictably aversive (Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999).
- While these trends might hold across populations, different people might be more sensitive to aversive interpersonal (IP) stimuli. We can call those differences IP sensitivities.
- IP sensitives tend to behave like anaphylactic allergens, varying in intensity between individuals and increasing in intensity with exposure to the irritant (Cunningham, Barbee, & Druen, 1997; Cunningham et al., 2005; O'Connor, 2011).
- IP sensitivities can be mapped onto the IP Circumplex, forming an Interpersonal Sensitives Circumplex (ISC). Generally, people show the highest sensitivity to behaviors most unlike their own (Hopwood et al., 2011).
- While research supports individual differences in IP sensitivities, we don't yet know if those differences predict aversive reactions like anger and disgust in daily life.
- Present study goals: investigate baseline IP sensitivities, anger, and disgust during interpersonal stressors (extreme IP behaviors) over five weeks.
- We hypothesize that baseline IP Sensitivity scores will prospectively predict anger and disgust in daily life following an IP stressor.
- We hypothesize that baseline IP sensitivities will moderate effects of others' behavior on anger and disgust.

Method

Participants

- 165 college students (126 females, 39 males) were recruited through the research subject pool. Participants ranged in age from 18-31 years (M = 19.43, SD = .90) and were ethnically diverse (56.6% Caucasian, 13.0% Asian/Asian American, 13.0% Latino/a, 8.7% African American/Black, and 8.7% Other).

Procedure

- Participants were asked to complete a survey measuring their baseline IP sensitivities in addition to 15 repeated measures diary surveys via Qualtrics over five weeks. They reported on both their perception of others' extreme IP behavior (i.e., bossy, cold, submissive, and needy) and emotional reactions (i.e., anger and disgust) following the social stressor.

Results

B's, Standard Errors, Confidence Intervals, and Partial rs

Predictor	*B(SE)*	*pr*	*p*	*95% CI*
Anger				
ISC Elevation	.28 (.06)	.06	**<.001**	[.010, .014]
ISC Amplitude	-.39 (.24)	..24	.106	[-.86, .08]
ISC Dominance	.45 (.21	.21	**.037**	[.027, .873]
ISC Affiliation	-.24 (.14)	.14	.082	[-.516, .031]
Disgust				
ISC Elevation	.28 (.06)	.06	**<.001**	[.010, .014]
ISC Amplitude	-.39 (.24)	..24	.106	[-.86, .08]
ISC Dominance	.45 (.21	.21	**.037**	[.027, .873]
ISC Affiliation	-.24 (.14)	.14	.082	[-.516, .031]

Interaction Effects for IP Sensitivities Prospectively Moderating Effects of Social Stressors on Affect

Outcome	*B (SE)*	*p*	*B (SE)*	*p*	*B (SE)*	*p*
	Bossy * ISC Elevation		**Bossy * ISC Dominance**		**Bossy *ISC Affiliation**	
Anger	-.0004 (.0009)	.656	.0001 (.002)	.916	-.002 (.001)	.216
Disgust	.001 (.001)	.158	-.002 (.001)	.256	-.001 (.001)	.54
	Cold * ISC Elevation		**Cold * ISC Dominance**		**Cold * ISC Affiliation**	
Anger	-.001 (.001)	.452	-.002 (.001)	.076	**-.003 (.001)**	**.007**
Disgust	.001 (.0005)	.056	-.001 (.001)	.256	-.001 (.0008)	.187
	Sub * ISC Elevation		**Sub * ISC Dominance**		**Sub * ISC Affiliation**	
Anger	**.002 (.001)**	**.045**	-.001 (.002)	.756	**.004 (.002)**	**.011**
Disgust	**.002 (.001)**	**.045**	-.001 (.002)	.756	**.004 (.002)**	**.011**
	Needy * ISC Elevation		**Needy * ISC Dominance**		**Needy * ISC Affiliation**	
Anger	-0.001 (.001)	.399	-0.001 (.002)	.584	-.002 (.001)	.154
Disgust	**.002 (.001)**	**.04**	-.0002 (.001)	.874	.0004 (.001)	.769

Main Effects

- Baseline IP Sensitivity scores, particularly elevation, prospectively predicted anger and disgust in daily life following an interpersonal stressor
- ISC amplitude and affiliation did not significantly predict levels of anger and disgust
- Social perceptions of others as cold, bossy, submissive, and needy all significantly predicted higher anger and disgust.

Interaction Effects

- ISC elevation significantly moderated the relationship between anger and others' submissive behavior, as well as disgust and others' submissive behavior.
- ISC elevation significantly moderated the relationship between anger and others' warm/needy behavior.
- ISC affiliation significantly moderated the relationship between anger and others' submissive behavior, as well as disgust and others' submissive behavior.
- ISC affiliation significantly moderated the relationship between anger and others' cold behavior

Discussion

- Results suggest that baseline IP sensitivities prospectively predict anger and disgust in daily life.
- Results suggest that baseline IP sensitivities moderate the effects of IP stressors (others' extreme IP behavior).
- Limitations include a gender (39 male to 126 female) limited sample. Given that research has found gender differences in IP sensitivities (Lambert & Hopwood, 2016), gender was controlled for in this study's analyses, but the lopsided nature of the study may limit the generalizability of these findings. Given the small number of men, there may be gender effects impacting our findings that our subject composition did not allow us to detect.
- This study could not determine if people with high ISC elevation experience higher frequency of aversive IP stimuli in everyday life, and whether an increase in aversive IP frequency leads to higher affective response. Future research on the ISC and what individuals judge to be "cold," "bossy," is needed.

Selected References

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