Anger Expression, Harassment, & Evaluation: Cardiovascular Reactivity and Recovery to Mental Stress

Elizabeth J. Vella

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
In
Psychology

Bruce H. Friedman, PhD, Chair
David W. Harrison, PhD
Robin Panneton, PhD
Angela Scarpa, PhD

May 10, 2005
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Cardiovascular reactivity, cardiovascular recovery, anger out, harassment, evaluation

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(ABSTRACT)

Anger and hostility have been attributed as early risk factors of coronary heart disease (CHD). However, many inconsistencies exist in the literature linking both of these constructs to CHD, as well as to cardiovascular reactivity (CVR) to stressors likely to give rise to CHD. A potential moderating influence discussed in the CVR literature concerns the issue of anger provocation, whereas assessment of the ability to evaluate the source of provocation may moderate the recovery process. The current study adopts a multivariate approach to assess the interactive effects of dispositional anger in predicting the CVR and recovery to mental arithmetic (MA) stress with and without harassment in 47 male undergraduate psychology students. Results revealed anger out (AO) to be associated with high vagal and low frequency power suppression in response to the MA task with harassment. Exposure to experimenter evaluation was associated with attenuated diastolic blood pressure recovery and facilitated vagal recovery in high AO subjects, whereas the opposite pattern was apparent for low AO subjects. The general findings suggest that trait anger interacts with situational influences to predict CVR and recovery to stressors.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation committee for their guidance in the development of this study. Further, I am grateful for the technical assistance of Israel Christie, and the efforts of Jeff Elcano, Thomas Evans, and Michael Sweet with data collection.
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