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Can ethnicity affect personality

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Lyness1 Department of Psychiatry, Rochester Center for Mind Body ResearchFind articles by Jan MoynihanAuthor information Copyright and License information DisclaimerGender, race/ethnicity, and personality are markers of significant psychosocial and biological variability. Each may have implications for allostatic load and resulting inflammatory processes, yet findings have been largely mixed. We investigated whether women, minorities, and those higher in Neuroticism and lower in Extraversion were at risk for elevated circulating levels of the pro-inflammatory cytokine interleukin (IL)-6 in a sample of 103 middle aged and older urban primary care patients. Regression analyses controlling for age, education, current depression levels, and chronic medical conditions revealed that women, minorities, and individuals lower in Extraversion had higher circulating levels of IL-6. Analyses of more specific personality traits revealed that the sociability and positive emotions components of Extraversion were unassociated with IL-6, but the activity facet-reflecting dispositional vigor and energy-was robustly associated with IL-6. The difference between high (+1 Standard Deviation (SD)) and low (-1 SD) trait activity was sufficient to shift IL-6 levels beyond a previously established high risk cut-point in both white and minority women. These findings suggest that while broad group differences between genders and races/ethnicities exist, personality represents an important source of individual differences in inflammation within groups. Future work should examine to what extent IL-6 levels are linked to temperament or genetic activity levels vs. physical activity itself, and whether IL-6 levels may be reduced by boosting regular activity levels in demographic segments such as women and minorities who appear susceptible to greater inflammation.Keywords: Interleukin-6, Gender differences, Race/Ethnicity, Extraversion, Activity, Primary CareGender, race/ethnicity, and individual differences in personality are powerful sources of variation in both psychosocial and biological attributes. Yet the extent to which each is associated with underlying inflammation remains unclear. In this paper, we focus specifically on gender, racial ethnic, and personality variation in the inflammatory cytokine interleukin (IL)-6, because it is an important indicator of allostatic load (De Martinis, Franceschi, Monti, et al., 2005; Franceschi, Bonafe, Valensin, et al., 2000), included in allostatic load composites (Glei, Goldman, Chuang, & Weinstein, 2007), and hence theoretically linked to stress-related factors which may differ by gender, race/ethnicity, and personality. We note, however, that IL-6 was not originally included in allostatic load composites. It has, however, been show to be highly predictive of mortality (Grunevald, Seeman, Ryff, Karlamangla, & Singer, 2006; Harris, T, Ferrucci, Tracy, Corti, Wacholder, Ettinger, et al., 1999), with mortality risk reportedly doubling at levels of 3.19 picograms per milliliter (pg/ml) (Harris et al., 1999). We also focus on a middle aged and older sample, given the cumulative nature of chronic stress adaptation and systemic inflammation (De Martinis, Franceschi, Monti, et al., 2005), and on the urban primary care population, given the large minority representation often served by these clinics (Fiscella & Williams, 2004).Prior reports on gender differences in IL-6 have been mixed. O'Connor et al. (2007) reported higher levels of IL-6 in lipopolysaccharide (LPS)-stimulated monocytes from women compared to men (mean age of 36.2 yrs). In contrast, others have observed a small but significant increase in LPS-stimulated production of IL-6 in young adult males compared to females (Von Aulock et al., 2006), and another study conducted in young adults found no significant gender differences in levels of serum IL-6 (Yang et al., 2007). Other report higher levels of IL-6 among women in older samples (Grunevald et al., 2006). Suarez (2008) also recently found that sleep may account to some degree for gender differences in inflammation.Differences in serum IL-6 have also been observed in racially-diverse women over the age of 65, with higher levels of IL-6 observed in African American women compared to Caucasians (Allison et al., 2006; Walston et al., 2005). In contrast, no significant differences in serum IL-6 were observed in African Americans versus Caucasians in a mixed gender sample aged 70-79 (Yaffe et al, 2003). If such differences in inflammation do exist however, they may constitute one conceivable explanation for general susceptibility, or the notion that individuals of disadvantaged socioeconomic status (SES) or disenfranchised groups show increased susceptibility to illness (Berkman & Kawachi, 2000). Furthermore, immune function is strongly influenced by psychosocial factors related to stress and coping (Coe & Laudenslager, 2007), and increased stressors such as perceived discrimination frequently encountered by historically disenfranchised groups (Williams, Yu, Jackson, J.S., Anderson, 1997) have been hypothesized to increase allostatic load and resulting inflammation (Carlson & Chamberlain, 2005).Race/ethnicity and gender represent general demographic group markers. However, considerable individual variation in inflammation may exist within genders and racial/ethnic groups related in part to social disadvantage and allostatic load. Five Factor Model (FFM) personality dimensions (McCrae & Costa, 2003), representing the primary axes of individual differences in psychological and behavioral dispositions, index variation in stress, coping, and genetic parameters potentially relevant to immune function and inflammation (Coe & Laudenslager, 2007; Segerstrom, 2000; Segerstrom, 2003). Neuroticism has been linked to exaggerated HPA axis responses to stressors (Eysenck, & Eysenck, 1985), and appears associated with higher resting cortisol (Miller, Cohen, Rabin, Skoner, & Doyle, 1999), lower antibody response to vaccination for hepatitis B (Marsland, Cohen, Rabin, & Manuck, 2001) and influenza (Phillips, Carroll, Burns, & Drayson, 2005), and lower resistance to a common cold virus after infection (Cohen, Doyle, Turner, Alper, & Skoner, 2003b). Extraversion is thought to be associated with a lower threshold for sympathetic arousal, (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985; Geen, 1997) and greater natural-killer cell cytotoxicity (Miller et al., 1999). Specific Extraversion components of sociability (Cohen, Doyle, Turner, Alper, & Skoner, 2003a) and positive emotions (Cohen, Doyle, Turner et al., 2003b) are also associated with resistance to common cold, while the latter is also associated with higher antibody titers in response to hepatitis B vaccination (Marsland et al., 2001). One study in an older, partly depressed sample found positive associations between Neuroticism, but not Extraversion and IL-6 (Bouhuys, Flentge, Oldenhinkel, & van den Berg, 2004). Other studies have variously reported associations between IL-6 and positive affect (Prather, Marsland, Muldoon, & Manuck, 2007), specific aspects of negative affect such as depression and cynicism that may be a function of poor health behaviors (Sjögren, Leanderson, Kristenson, & Ernerudh, 2006), and no associations between trait negative affect and IL-6 (Marsland, Sathanoori, Muldoon, & Manuck, 2007).We examined whether IL-6 varied between gender and/or racial/ethnic groups in diverse urban primary care patient population. Although prior results have been mixed, we hypothesized that women and minority patients would show higher circulating levels of IL-6, as such differences have appeared at least as often as not in prior studies. We also hypothesized that higher Neuroticism and lower Extraversion would be associated with higher IL-6. In other words, we suspected that while gender and/or race/ethnicity would mark general group differences in inflammation, personality would index individual variability in inflammation within groups, corresponding to independent effects for each factor. We also explored all 2 and 3 way interactions between these factors.Patients aged 40 and older, recruited in person at the time of clinical visits and through flyers at the Family Medicine Center (FMC) of the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC), attended a research appointment at the FMC or the URMC General Clinical Research Center (GCRC). At the appointment, participants completed an interview assessing demographics and psychosocial characteristics, the NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) measure of personality, the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale-Revised (CES-D R), and a checklist of chronic health-conditions (see instruments, below). Patients then underwent venipuncture by a trained phlebotomist in either the FMC laboratory, or by a clinical research nurse in the GCRC. Approximately 2/3 of the measurements were taken in the afternoon, the remainder being a random group of subjects taken in the morning according to availability of research staff and facilities. Subjects received \$50 compensation, and the study was approved by the local IRB.OF 107 patients recruited and interviewed, 103 patients provided usable data on all variables of interest. As can be seen in Table 1, the sample was on average 52 (SD=9) years old, 58% were of minority race/ethnicity (almost all African American), and 77% were female. With respect to SES, 61% reported an income less than \$20,000 a year, and 81% less than \$30,000; 25% were employed full or part time, 10% were retired, and 65% unemployed; 52% had high school or less education, while 48% had one year or more of college. On average, patients had two chronic conditions, with the three most common being hypertension (35%), gastro-esophageal reflux (GERD; 25%), and Type II diabetes (18%).OverallWhiteMinorityMaleFemaleMean / N (SD / %)Mean / N (SD / %)Mean / N (SD / %)Mean / N (SD / %)Mean / N (SD / %)Age (years)52 (9)51.7 (7.1)52.1 (10.2)50.5 (6.2)52.4 (9.7)Female79 (76.7%)32 (73%)47 (80%)---Male24 (23.3%)12 (27%)12 (20%)---Minority59 (57.3%)---12 (50%)47 (60%)White44 (42.7%)---12 (50%)32 (40%)Some College or Greater Education50 (48.5%)28 (64%)22 (37%)11 (46%)39 (49%)High School or Less Education53 (51.5%)16 (36%)37 (63%)13 (54%)40 (51%)CES-D R Scores16.9 (13.2)16.5 (13.7)17.1 (12.9)18.1 (13.8)16.5 (13)Chronic Conditions2 (2)2 (1)1.9 (1.8)1.4 (1.4)2.1 (2)Neuroticism Domain (T-scores)55.4 (11.2)56.5 (12.2)54.6 (10.5)54.5 (10)55.7 (11.6)Neuroticism Subcomponents (raw scores)Anxiety6.7 (2.6)7.2 (2.9)6.4 (2.3)6.4 (2.4)6.8 (2.6)Depression6.4 (2.8)6.5 (3.1)6.4 (2.6)6 (2.2)6.6 (3)Self-Reproach12.8 (5.7)13.8 (6.2)12 (5.3)12.6 (5.4)12.8 (5.9)Extraversion (T-scores)47.6 (11.4)47.8 (10.9)47.4 (11.0)50.3 (10.5)46.8 (11.6)Extraversion Subcomponents (raw scores)Sociability3.3 (3)8 (3)3.8 (3)3.8 (3)3.8 (3)Positive Affect19 (3.1)19.2 (2.9)19.9 (3.3)19.6 (2.3)19.8 (3.3)Activity7.7 (3)8 (2.7)7.6 (3)7.9 (3)7.6 (3)UCLA Loneliness Scale19.5 (4.7)19.2 (4.3)19.7 (5.1)20.2 (5.1)19.2 (4.7)Interleukin-6 (pg/ml)3.8 (3)3.4 (2.6)4.2 (3.2)3.2 (2.1)4.3 (3.1)IL-6 Assay Subsequent to venipuncture, blood was kept on ice, centrifuged, and serum stored at -80° C. Serum IL-6 concentrations were determined via assay using non-duplicate standard ELISA protocols and anti-cytokine antibody pairs (BD Biosciences, San Diego, CA). NEO-FFI: The NEO-FFI is a well-validated and heavily used 60-item measure assessing the FFM personality domains of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Responses involve a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ("Strongly Disagree") to 4 ("Strongly Agree"). In the current sample, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency estimates were .85 (Neuroticism), .76 (Extraversion), .71 (Openness), .60 (Agreeableness), and .81 (Conscientiousness). Personality scales were converted to T-scores (Mean 50, Standard Deviation [SD] 10) according to national norms (Costa & McCrae, 1992). T-scores of 50 thus represent the 50th percentile of national norms. Each domain scale can also be broken down into subcomponents, which can be used to isolate which component(s) of a given broad-band FFM dimension are responsible for observed associations (Chapman, 2007; Saucier, 1998). The present analyses focused on the Neuroticism subcomponents of depression, anxiety, and self-reproach, and the Extraversion subcomponents of sociability, activity, and positive affect.CES-D R The CES-D R is a 20-item measure of depressive symptoms experienced in the previous week (Gallo, & Rabins, 1999). Responses involve a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ("not at all") to 3 ("nearly every day"). Cronbach's alpha internal consistency in the current sample was .93. CES-D R scores served as a control variable in analyses, to ensure that any observed associations between IL-6 and gender, race/ethnicity, or personality were not artifacts of group or individual differences in current depressive symptoms.Chronic Conditions Checklist Patients completed a checklist of chronic conditions adapted from that used in the Middle Development in the US survey (Brim, Ryff, & Kessler, 2004). The checklist asked if a physician had diagnosed them with any of 25 common chronic medical conditions spanning respiratory, gastro-intestinal, neurological, endocrine, and cardiovascular problems, ranging from hypertension, to diabetes, to cardiovascular disease (CVD). These were summed to form a morbidity index (Fortin, Bravo, Hudon, Vanasse, & Lapointe, 2005), which served as a control variable to ensure that any observed associations between IL-6 and gender, race/ethnicity, or personality Neuroticism and/or Extraversion and IL-6 were not simply due to the differences between groups or individuals in disease burden.For all analyses, IL-6 was log10 transformed to improve normality and reduce outlier influence, and personality scores were scaled by the national standard deviation (i.e., 10 T-score points) to facilitate interpretation. Thus, a 1 unit increase in personality represented the difference between a person relative average in a trait (population mean, or 50th percentile) and one high (+1 population SD, or 84th %ile); or, equivalently, between a person low in a trait (-1 SD, or 16th percentile) and average (mean, or 50th percentile). Subsequent to descriptive analyses characterizing the sample, we examined the associations between IL-6 gender, race/ethnicity, and personality in a series of linear regression analyses with robust standard errors. We began by fitting separate bivariate models for gender, minority status, Neuroticism, and Extraversion, then multivariate models including all factors and additionally adjusting for 1) age (scaled in decades) and education (some college or greater against a reference category of high school or less), then 2) additionally adjusting for current depressive symptoms and chronic conditions. As we tested 4 hypotheses, we applied the False Discovery Rate (FDR; Benjamini & Hotchberg, 1995) to p-values from the fully adjusted model. In the event of significant Neuroticism or Extraversion associations, we then conducted follow-up analyses replacing the broad domain scale with its subcomponents to clarify which specific aspects of the FFM dimension were responsible for observed associations, applying the FDR to the p-values for multiple components of each domain.We gauged the magnitude of IL-6 associations for gender, race/ethnicity, and personality in two ways. First, we examined increments in IL-6 variance explained by each factor of interest. Second, we computed covariate adjusted means from the final model for different combinations of gender, race/ethnicity, and high (+1 SD) vs. low (-1 SD) levels of personality traits, holding other covariates at sample means. We then reverse-log transformed these covariate-adjusted means back to their original scale and compared them to the "high-risk" IL-6 threshold of 3.19 pg/ml, at which Harris et al. (1999) reported a doubling of mortality risk in a large epidemiologic study. This study used the same assay kit as ours. We also examined interactions between gender, minority status, and personality.Unadjusted associations between IL-6 and gender, race/ethnicity, and personality traits (Models 1-4, respectively) are shown in the first four columns of Table 2. Higher Extraversion was related to lower, while female gender was related to higher levels of IL-6. A trend suggested that minority race/ethnicity was also associated with higher levels of IL-6.Unadjusted and Adjusted Associations Between Neuroticism, Extraversion, and IL-6Model 1Model 2Model 3Model 4Model 5Model 6B (SE)pB (SE)pB (SE)pB (SE)PNeuroticism.05.125.03.357.00.903(.03)(.03)(.04)Extraversion-.08 (.03).004--.05 (.03).046--.05 (.03).050Female.30

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