



What Predicts the Fear of Contamination?

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Introduction

- Contamination fears and washing/cleaning rituals are among the most common presentations of OC symptoms
- Predictors of these symptoms (e.g., disgust, body vigilance), have generally been examined individually
- Questions that remain are: (1) How do these predictors relate to one another? (2) How are they uniquely associated with contamination symptoms?
- The current study explored how contamination cognitions, body vigilance, disgust sensitivity, and experiential avoidance jointly and uniquely predict contamination symptoms

Method

Participants

- 200 Intro Psych undergraduates at UNC-CH
- 64% female, 70% Caucasian, M age = 18.91 years old ($SD = 1.08$)

Measures and Procedure

- Participants completed the following self-report measures online:
- Contamination Cognitions Scale (CCS):** likelihood and severity overestimates of contamination
- Body Vigilance Scale (BVS):** sensitivity to internal bodily sensations
- Disgust Scale (DS-R):** disgust sensitivity
- Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (AAQ-II):** psychological flexibility
- Dimensional Obsessive-Compulsive Scale - Contamination (DOCS-C):** time, avoidance, distress, interference, and difficulty disregarding concerns about germs and contamination

Results

Table 1. Mean scores on study measures

Measure	M (SD)
CCS	39.90 (23.70)
BVS	12.89 (7.08)
DS-R	2.14 (0.62)
AAQ-II	49.36 (9.88)
DOCS-C	2.78 (2.61)

Table 2. Pearson's correlations between study measures

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. CCS	---	.41*	.47*	-.10	.40*
2. BVS		---	.21*	-.20*	.38*
3. DS-R			---	-.13	.26*
4. AAQ-II				---	-.33*
5. DOCS-C					---

* $p < .005$

- Significant inter-correlations were observed among study measures in the expected directions
- Because higher scores on the AAQ indicate better psychological adjustment, correlations between this measure and other cognition and symptom measures were expected to be in the negative direction

Table 3. Simultaneous Regression Analyses Predicting DOCS Contamination

Predicting DOCS-C	β	t	sr^2	p
CCS	.27	3.62	.22	<.001
BVS	.21	3.10	.19	.002
DS-R	.05	0.72	.04	.47
AAQ-II	-.25	-4.07	-.25	<.001

- In a simultaneous multivariate regression, the joint contribution of the predictors accounted for 28% of the variance in DOCS Contamination scores, $F(4, 195) = 19.19$, $p < .001$.
- The CCS, BVS, and AAQ-II, but not the DS-R, accounted for significant unique variance

Discussion

- Contamination-related cognitions, body vigilance, and experiential avoidance, but not disgust, predicted contamination-related OC symptoms
- It may be that examples provided on the DOCS-C are more focused on dirt, germs, and sickness, rather than feelings of disgust, such that disgust sensitivity is not predictive of the DOCS-C over and above other contamination-related constructs
- Future research should investigate how mental contamination (i.e., feelings of contamination that arise and persist regardless of direct contact with feared stimuli) may relate to these constructs
- The present study is limited by the use of a non-clinical sample, online data collection, and the correlational design.