

Affective Responses in Dialectical Thinkers

I. Importance of the problem

Because emotional experiences enable people to experience the world around them in many ways, it is important to understand the ways in which those affective experiences interact with other psychological functions, such as dialectical thinking. In doing so, we can better understand and predict the differences in emotional experiences when taking into account different ways of thinking.

II. What is already known about the problem

A. Emotional experiences are more complex than just experiencing one emotion at any given time.

B. Empirical evidence has supported the ability to experience conflicting emotions in various situations, such as gambling or viewing films.

C. Empirical evidence has also found that dialectical thinking (tolerance for opposing views/outcomes) can influence the experience of mixed emotions. More specifically, by having an effect on how intense the components of mixed emotions are felt.

D. Studies have mainly focused on longitudinal data or memories to study this relationship.

E. There has also been evidence that dialectical thinking is found more in individuals from Eastern (vs. Western) cultures.

F. Other studies have found no real differences in the capabilities of Eastern (vs. Western) individuals to engage in dialectical thought.

III. What is not yet known about the problem

A. Dialecticism has been thought of as being a predominant way of thinking primarily in individuals of Eastern cultures, but evidence to back this up is inconclusive.

B. There is still not enough evidence that can suggest dialectical thinking causes differences in emotional experiences in individuals.

C. There may be more ways of priming dialectical thought in individuals, other than through memories.

D. Other components of emotion, like motivation, have not been taken into account when looking at the interaction of emotion and dialectical thinking.

IV. What specific question(s) the study focuses on

A. The present study focuses on the differences between dialectical and non-dialectical thinking on experiences that involve polarizing emotions.

a. Dialectical thinking is the tendency to tolerating conflicting outcomes in the same situation.

b. Polarizing emotional experiences involve the perception that an event/stimulus is both positive and negative.

c. More specifically, the study focuses on analyzing the extent of the intensity (strength) of the mixed emotional components (positive and negative valence) in those who think dialectically (vs. those who don't) during different emotional situations.

B. Being able to engage in dialectical thought may not necessarily be dependent on having a specific type of self-construal (independent vs. interdependent).

C. Considering the overall approach (motivation) toward situations that may present mixed feelings could also help to understand whether an individual is likely to repeat the same cognitive process in the future as well.

V. What research hypotheses are being tested

A. It's hypothesized in this study that:

- a. Those primed for dialectical thought (vs. not) will exhibit similar levels of mixed emotional thoughts across different emotional situations (i.e., positive and negative situations).
- b. Dialectical thinking can also be manipulated in a predominantly Western sample (independent culture).

VI. How the present study attempts to go about addressing this research hypothesis

A. A minimum of 60 participants will take part in the study, 30 in the experimental condition and 30 in the control condition.

- a. Those in the experimental condition will be asked to read scenarios that present mixed emotional situations and specifically asked to evaluate the conflicting aspects of those scenarios.
- b. Those in the control condition will be asked to read the same scenarios but not asked to evaluate the conflicting aspects of those scenarios.

B. In order to assess the emotional experiences of the scenarios, participants will have to answer to five different seven-point-scales that will ask about emotional valence, arousal, approach, and mixed emotional experience.

- a. For valence, there will be two scales, one for how happy/content the individual felt and another for how sad/disappointed the individual felt.
- b. For arousal, there will be one scale asking to indicate how calm or excited the individual felt.
- c. For approach, there will be one scale asking to indicate to what extent the individual would like to experience the scenario once more or not.
- d. For mixed emotional experience there will be one closed question, whether or not they experienced two opposing emotions during the event (*yes* or *no*). If the answer is *yes*, then the following scale will ask about the timing of the felt emotions.

C. For a manipulation check, the participants will be reminded of the scenarios. Then they will be asked to respond to The Dialectical Self-Scale (a 32-item questionnaire designed to see the extent to which dialectical thought is present).

D. To make sure that participants are predominantly of independent self-construals, they will be asked to fill out the 31-Item Self-Construal Scale.

E. Lastly, demographics would be given to participants.

F. The study will need to use an omnibus ANOVA in order to test for significant differences in mean variances of emotional experiences, depending on condition (experimental vs. control).

G. In addition, contrasts will have to be used when comparing more specific means of emotional responses.

VII. What the results would look like if the hypotheses were to be supported

A. Based on the trends in literature, it would be expected that dialectical thinkers would experience similar levels of mixed emotional experiences as non-dialectical thinkers during negative situations, but would experience higher levels of mixed emotions during positive situations.

B. In addition, the priming of dialectical thinking would cause those in the experimental condition to have greater scores of dialecticism (vs. those in the control condition).

C. Because approach measures have never been implemented, it would be hard to hypothesize on a direction. However, because this would be a Western sample, the effectiveness of the manipulation would not necessarily mean that Western individuals would have future motivation towards using dialectical thought in future situations. This would be better analyzed with both a sample of Eastern and Western individuals. Nevertheless, it is still informative to analyze and theorize for future studies.