



ELSEVIER

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

SCIENCE @ DIRECT®

Personality and Individual Differences 37 (2004) 905–915

PERSONALITY AND  
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

[www.elsevier.com/locate/paid](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/paid)

# Endowment and contrast: the role of positive and negative emotions on well-being appraisal

Sheung-Tak Cheng \*

*Department of Applied Social Studies, City University of Hong Kong, 83 Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon, Hong Kong*

Received 29 April 2003; accepted 24 October 2003

Available online 11 December 2003

---

## Abstract

Linear additive models of affect and subjective well-being do not account for why people can uphold their sense of well-being during adversity. This paper presents a multiplicative model—the Affective Endowment-Contrast Theory, and reports a prospective study testing the theory. Endowment means that the accumulation of positive (PA) and negative affect (NA) has direct effects on well-being. Contrast, represented by the product term  $PA \times NA$ , means that the effect of PA is stronger when NA is high than when NA is low. The effect of contrast thus partly compensates the main effect of NA during difficult times. Seventy-one university students completed affect diaries over a 4-week period. The results provided support for the well-being repair function of contrast.

© 2003 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Happiness; Life satisfaction; Well-being; Affect; Endowment; Contrast

---

## 1. Introduction

The affect balance model (Bradburn, 1969) assumes that subjective well-being (SWB) is a function of the difference between positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA). It assumes that PA and NA contribute linearly and independently to SWB. This paper proposes a theory that extends the affect balance model to take into account the *positive* function of NA. Before I go on to talk about the theory, a clarification of terminology is necessary.

The meaning of the term *SWB* is ambiguous in the literature. Sometimes, it is used to mean PA minus NA (Bradburn, 1969), sometimes life satisfaction alone (Neugarten, Havighurst, & Tobin,

---

\* Tel.: +852-2788-8745; fax: +852-2788-8960.

E-mail address: [tak.cheng@cityu.edu.hk](mailto:tak.cheng@cityu.edu.hk) (S.-T. Cheng).

1961), sometimes a combination of life satisfaction, PA and (lack of) NA (Diener, 2000; Lu et al., 2001), and sometimes broadened to include other positive cognitions, vigor and mental alertness (Hills & Argyle, 2002; Røysamb, Harris, Magnus, Vittersø, & Tambs, 2002). In this paper, I use the term *well-being appraisal* (WBA) to refer to an overall evaluation of life as a whole. Questions pertaining to global happiness and satisfaction (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; Cantril, 1965; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) fall into this domain.

### *1.1. Limitations of a linear model of affect and well-being appraisal*

What is most remarkable about human beings is our ability to adapt under the most difficult circumstances (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In this connection, a linear additive model that is commonly assumed in the field may be too simplistic. Such a model does not explain why individuals undergoing hardship can still maintain a reasonably high sense of well-being (e.g., Brickman, Coates, & Janoff-Bulman, 1978; Miller, Manne, Taylor, & Keates, 1996).

Two psychological processes were suggested by Tversky and Griffin (1991) to explain the relationship between events and well-being (see also Schwarz & Strack, 2000). According to Tversky and Griffin, the same event has both an endowment and a contrast effect on well-being. As for endowment, a positive event raises one's well-being over the long haul, and a negative event reduces it. As for contrast, an *earlier* positive event reduces one's well-being due to the diminished utility of subsequent events, whereas an earlier negative event raises it.

In one of the experiments reported in Tversky and Griffin (1991), university students read stories told by fictitious high school students. Two stories were provided, one about an event that had happened the week before, the other happened on the day of storytelling. The past event varied in terms of valence, whereas the present event, fixed neutral, varied in terms of whether it was related to the former or not, thus creating a  $2$  (valence of past event)  $\times$   $2$  (relatedness of the two events) between subjects design. They were asked to rate the happiness of the fictitious person on an 11-point scale. Results showed (a) a significant main effect for valence, meaning that the happiness rating was lower when the past event was negative than when it was positive, and vice versa (endowment effect), and (b) a significant interaction effect for valence  $\times$  relatedness, meaning that a related negative event in the past produced higher happiness ratings, whereas a related positive event produced lower ratings (contrast effect). Tversky and Griffin (1991) further argued that other experiments designed to show mood's effect on WBA through mood-induction procedures could be interpreted within this endowment-contrast framework.

Hence, endowment and contrast work in opposite directions, and while the affect balance model takes well into account the endowment effects, it ignores the possibility of contrasts. If the effect of a present event depends partially on its relation to past events, independent of its valence, then well-being cannot be represented by a simple subtraction equation. Suppose persons A and B each faces the same current events with the same outcomes. Suppose also that both had prior experiences with these events. Person A's past experiences were largely negative, whereas person B's were largely positive or neutral. According to the affect balance equation, everything else being the same, person B is predicted to have a higher sense of well-being than person A. However, according to the endowment-contrast paradigm, person B is not necessarily better off. If person B's prior experiences were largely positive, which one currently enjoys higher well-being depends on the relative size of the endowment effect (in person B's case) and the contrast effect (in person

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات