

Abstract of the Thesis entitled:

How Mixed Emotion Influences the Health Outcomes of Different Age Groups from
Different Cultures

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Abstract

Mixed emotion, as the co-occurrence of positive and negative affects, is found to be associated with positive health outcomes, greater subjective well-being and adaptive coping. Although the experience of mixed emotion is altered by age and culture, it is still not clear how its effects vary at the individual level, cultural level or situational level. Moreover, little empirical evidence has been provided for the underlying mechanism of the effects of mixed emotion. Therefore, two studies were conducted to clarify 1) the roles of age, culture and situation in how mixed emotion influences health, and 2) the processes underlying this emotion-health association. In Study 1, with experience sampling data of 212 participants aged from 18 to 83 years, the effects of mixed emotion on physical health were compared in three culture groups (European American, Chinese American and Hong Kong Chinese). Given the inconsistency of previous findings, two different approaches were adopted to measure

mixed emotion. Although the covariation approach found mixed emotion was positively associated with age while the ambivalence approach revealed an opposite pattern, both measures showed that greater mixed emotion predicted fewer physical symptoms among Hong Kong Chinese, particularly in pleasant situations. In Study 2, I collected the physiological and behavioral data of 131 college students to compare the effects of mixed emotion and positive emotion in reducing psychosocial stress. It was found both mixed emotion and positive emotion could help with individuals' cardiovascular recovery, but in the mixed emotion group, participants showed more solution-oriented choices and greater emotional flexibility. These findings advanced our understanding of mixed emotion, and provided empirical evidences for the theoretical models on the emotion-health link.

Key words: mixed emotion, physical Health, age, coping, emotional flexibility