Suffering rather later than sooner vs. having a bright future: Exploring the relationship between affect and psychological distance

Sprache/Language: Deutsch/ English

Emotions decline over time: On the one hand the anger you feel over your spilled Starbucks’s coffee will (fortunately) end. On the other hand the joy over your chocolate cookie (sadly) will not last forever. This well-known and simple relationship between temporal psychological distance and affective states is a starting point for this master-thesis. The thesis will however dive deeper into the relationship between psychological distance and affective states.

E.g. Fiedler, Jung, Wänke, and Alexopoulos (2012) found that negative topics are perceived to be more psychologically distant than positive topics (presumably because negative objects trigger avoidance behavior). On the contrary Williams, Stein, and Galguera (2014) state that abstract thinking (which according to construal level theory goes along higher psychological distances) increases the perceived positivity of an object and that psychological distance per se reduces perceived affective intensity. These articles rise the question whether the affective states of psychological distances depend on the stimulus given first: We want to experience negative events rather later than sooner (affect given and distance construed) but have a bright future (distance given and affect construed).

The thesis will draw on that speculation. It will review relevant literature and pay special attention towards the manipulated and measured variables in empirical findings. Conducting empirical research as a part of the thesis is up to discussion.

Introductory literature:
