The Need for Affect: Individual Differences in the Motivation to Approach or Avoid Emotions

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ABSTRACT The present research developed and tested a new individual-difference measure of the need for affect, which is the motivation to approach or avoid emotion-inducing situations. The first phase of the research developed the need for affect scale. The second phase revealed that the need for affect is related to a number of individual differences in cognitive processes (e.g., need for cognition, need for closure), emotional processes (e.g., affect intensity, repression-sensitization), behavioral inhibition and activation (e.g., sensation seeking), and aspects of personality (Big Five dimensions) in the expected directions, while not being redundant with them. The third phase of the research indicated that, compared to people low in the need for affect, people high in the

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need for affect are more likely to (a) possess extreme attitudes across a variety of issues, (b) choose to view emotional movies, and (c) become involved in an emotion-inducing event (the death of Princess Diana). Overall, the results indicate that the need for affect is an important construct in understanding emotion-related processes.

Fictional characters in cinema, literature, television, and theatre often reflect the popular notion that some people are analytical and avoid emotional experiences, whereas other people are passionate and seek out emotional experiences. Perhaps the *Star Trek* characters of Mr. Spock and Dr. McCoy are the best-known exemplars of this idea: Spock is uncomfortable with emotions and prefers to engage in analytical thinking, whereas McCoy is passionate and eagerly embraces emotions. Such juxtapositions of people who like to think with those who like to feel suggest that individual differences in thinking and feeling are interesting and important, while also giving the impression that people like to think or to feel, but not both.

Interestingly, the extant research supports the notion that affect and cognition are distinct processes. For example, Zajonc's (1980) two-systems view suggests that emotional processes are more basic than cognitive processes and that emotional processes are distinct from cognitive processes. In addition, Epstein's (1998) cognitive-experiential self theory suggests that people possess two distinct information processing systems: One system is holistic and based on affective experience, whereas the other system is analytical and based on rules of reasoning. Importantly, however, these perspectives allow for interaction between emotional and cognitive processes. Indeed, it is apparent that emotions often follow from particular cognitions (e.g., attributions of failure to oneself), and cognitive tasks often involve some amount of emotion (Damasio, 1994; Forgas, 1995). For example, effortful cognitive tasks may involve at least a moderate amount of emotion (e.g., frustration, joy).

Given these observations, an interesting question is whether the motivation to approach cognitive tasks and the motivation to approach emotions are empirically related. The relation between these motivations has not been established because past research has focused on people's motivation to perform effortful cognitive tasks, without validating a measure of the need to seek emotions. In fact, a measure of the need for affect could be used to explore a number of issues in the regulation of emotion-relevant behavior. For this reason, the present

research developed and validated a measure of this need and examined the extent to which individual differences in the need for affect predict a variety of important variables, including the need to pursue effortful cognitive tasks.

The Nomonological Net for the Need for Affect

As background, it is useful to consider how past research has examined individual differences, in particular aspects of cognition and emotion. Research on individual differences in cognition can be viewed as having focused on three variables: cognitive ability (e.g., intelligence tests; Daniel, 1997), cognitive style (e.g., need for closure, uncertainty orientation; Kruglanski, Webster, & Klem, 1993; Sorrentino & Short, 1986), and the motivation to engage in cognitive processes (e.g., need for cognition; Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). In contrast, efforts to examine individual differences in affect have focused predominantly on emotional ability and emotional style. Emotional ability can be tapped using a variety of measures that assess the skill with which people perceive, regulate, utilize, and express emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1993; Salovey & Mayer, 1990), such as the Affective Orientation Scale (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1990) and clinical measures of alexithymia (e.g., Taylor, Ryan, & Bagby, 1985). Emotional style can be assessed using measures of tendencies to experience intense emotions (Affect Intensity Measure; Larsen & Diener, 1987), to repress emotions (Repression-Sensitization Scale; Byrne, 1961), to express emotions (Ambivalence over Emotional Expressiveness Questionnaire; see King, 1998), and to chronically experience positive or negative emotions (Positive and Negative Affect Scales; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).

Our hypothesis is that there may also be individual differences in the *motivation* to seek out emotions. We define the need for affect as the general motivation of people to approach or avoid situations and activities that are emotion inducing for themselves and others. Because emotions are an ubiquitous part of life, we expect that this need is a pan-cultural necessity. It includes the desire to experience and understand the emotions of oneself and others, and it includes the belief that emotions are useful for shaping judgments and behavior. People would not attempt to experience and understand others' emotions if they found emotions uncomfortable, and they would not approach emotions if they regarded emotions as unproductive.

There are many interesting potential correlates of the need for affect. For example, as described above, the need for affect may be related to the motivation to think. In addition, social learning processes may cause sex differences in the need for affect (see King, 1998, and Kring & Gordon, 1998, for related evidence). For example, men might learn to avoid emotions to escape showing signs of weakness (e.g., from despair) and to prevent the unintentional destructive use of their strength (e.g., lashing out in anger at a weaker person). In contrast, women might learn to approach emotions because emotions enable them to empathize with the emotional experiences of others, thereby conforming to a caregiving role. Also, individual differences in need for affect may predict other important psychological variables, such as attitude extremity. For example, people who like to experience emotions may be more inclined to possess extreme opinions regarding controversial issues, because extreme opinions allow people to experience strong emotions. Interestingly, people who are high in the need for affect might also express strong attitudes toward social groups because sensations of hatred or high regard may be intrinsically satisfying. All of these possibilities can be examined using a need for affect scale.

Importantly, our conceptualization of the need for affect comprises two basic features. First, it assumes that people differ in the extent to which they pursue a variety of affective experiences, which may vary in their intensity, quality, stability, specificity, clarity, and valence. Thus, consistent with the conceptualization of affect described by Fiske and Taylor (1990), our conceptualization includes emotions, moods, preferences, and evaluations. Although a person should desire some affective states (e.g., clear moods, positive emotions) more than others (e.g., obscure moods, negative emotions), the notion of the need for affect assumes that there will also be meaningful individual differences in the pursuit of affect on average. This notion makes the need for affect distinct from the typical notion of emotion regulation, which focuses on people's attempts to maintain positive emotions (e.g., Erber, 1996; Gross, 1998; Thayer, 1996; cf. Parrott, 1993). The typical notion of affect regulation does not explain why people occasionally pursue negative and epistemically vague emotions, and the comprehension of such ostensibly irrational behaviors is an important goal of personality theory (Allport, 1965; Epstein, 1998). In fact, considerable theory and research support the idea that people may seek a broad range of emotional experiences (Jung, 1970; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; see also Tomkins, 1962, 1963).

Interestingly, several measures of individual differences in emotional experience share this emphasis on a variety of emotions (e.g., Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1990; King & Emmons, 1990; Kring, Smith, & Neale, 1994; Larsen & Diener, 1987). In fact, such breadth of focus is also embraced outside of the emotions literature. For example, the need for cognition reflects differences in motivation across a range of cognitive endeavors and not only in motivations to engage in specific types of cognitive activities (e.g., verbal vs. spatial problems; Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarvis, 1996). By focusing on general tendencies, individual difference measures can attain a breadth that has unique predictive validity.

The second feature of the need for affect is that it subsumes both a motivation to approach emotions and a motivation to avoid them. A long-standing tradition of psychological theory and research suggests that, in general, approach and avoidance motivations are at least somewhat distinct and, therefore, both motivations should be assessed (e.g., Hull, 1952; Lewin, 1951; Miller, 1959; see also Higgins, 1997). The importance of this objective has also been supported in the attitudes literature; this literature is particularly relevant to our research because the need for affect is like an attitude toward emotion. Attitudes research has revealed that, although people who like an attitude object (e.g., a car) tend not to dislike it, people can sometimes both like and dislike an attitude object (e.g., Kaplan, 1972; Maio, Bell, & Esses, 1996; Thompson, Zanna, & Griffin, 1995; see also Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1997). Thus, it is becoming more common to assess separately the positive and negative dimensions of attitudes in addition to examining net attitudes. Similarly, it would be valuable to assess separately the inclinations to approach and avoid emotions, as well as the net need for affect (defined as emotion approach minus emotion avoidance).

Separately examining emotion approach and emotion avoidance is a valuable goal because these motivations might occasionally have distinct correlates. There is a precedent for this possibility because distinct effects of approach and avoidance motivations have been revealed in other areas of research. For example, research on achievement motivation has found that approaching success and avoiding failure have distinct effects on intrinsic motivation (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996) and subjective well-being (Elliot, Sheldon, & Church, 1997). In addition, neuropsychological research has distinguished between approach and avoidance motivations (e.g., Gray, 1972, 1990), while suggesting that approach motivations are

closely linked to the experience of positive affect and avoidance motivations are closely linked to the experience of negative affect (e.g., Davidson, 1998; Heubeck, Wilkinson, & Cologon, 1994; Lang, 1995).

In addition, we expect that distinct effects of emotion approach and emotion avoidance might occur partly because they differ in motivational strength. In particular, people should be more motivated to approach emotions than to avoid emotions. The higher motivation to approach emotions should occur because (1) the experience of emotions is at least somewhat intrinsically satisfying, and (2) emotions help motivate behavior and guide judgments (Schwarz, 1990). Interestingly, classic research indicates that, in general, avoidance motivations tend to be weaker than approach motivations when organisms are far from a goal state. However, there appears to be a threshold where the avoidance motivation begins to emerge strongly (Miller, 1959). Such a pattern might be observed for the approach and avoidance of emotions. That is, as the potential strength of an emotional experience grows stronger, the motivation to avoid emotions might become more important. This motivation might become more important because emotions do not become "dangerous" until they are at least somewhat strong. As a result, the motivation to avoid emotions might be uniquely predictive of behavior when one anticipates or is currently experiencing emotions that are intense and involving.

The Present Research

To explore the potential theoretical and practical implications of the need for affect, the present research systematically developed and tested a measure of this need. Our principal goal was to examine the relations between the overall need for affect and many criterion variables, thereby testing the validity of this construct. The criterion variables included individual differences in emotion, cognition, and personality, which enabled us to assess the scale's convergent and divergent validity. The criterion variables also included relevant attitudes and behaviors (e.g., willingness to view emotion-inducing films), which enabled us to examine predictive validity. As a secondary goal, we tested whether the motivation to approach emotions and the motivation to avoid emotions exhibit distinct correlates.

We should note that, after completing our studies, we learned of recent consumer research attempting to measure a need for emotion (Raman,

Chattopadhyay, & Hoyer, 1995; Sojka & Giese, 1997). Although the goals of this past research support the importance of the need for affect, the research possessed several important limitations. First, the past research developed two different scales that exhibited markedly different correlations with other individual-difference variables (especially the need for cognition; Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). In addition, predictive validity data, confirmatory factor analyses, and test-retest data were not published with the scales. Also, one scale included only items pertaining to emotion approach (Sojka & Giese, 1997), and the other scale included only items pertaining to emotion avoidance (Raman et al., 1995). Such issues led the authors to conclude that their evidence was preliminary. Our research attempted to provide a more comprehensive approach to scale development, while also providing vital evidence for predictive validity, which is absent from the past research.[1]

Phase 1: Scale Development and Factor Analyses

Scale development and exploratory factor analyses. The first stage of our research involved the generation of 88 items. We then obtained peer feedback that enabled us to remove 28 items that possessed relatively weak face validity, leaving a pool of 60 items. Next, 355 participants (215 women, 137 men, and 3 who did not indicate their sex) were asked to respond to each of the 60 items, using a scale from –3 (*strongly disagree*) to 3 (*strongly agree*). Participants' responses were submitted to several exploratory factor analyses that used different methods of extraction and rotation (e.g., principal axes factoring with oblimin rotation). These analyses consistently revealed two factors, using scree plots and the eigenvalue-greater-than-one criterion.

Based on our results, we initially selected 29 items for use in our measure: 15 items measured the motivation to approach emotional situations, and 14 measured the motivation to avoid emotional situations. All of these items possessed good psychometric properties, factor loadings

1. Data from a recent sample of participants revealed that, as expected, there are moderate correlations between total scores on our scale and (a) the measure that was developed by Sojka and Giese (1997), $r\,(18) = .61$, $p < .01$, and (b) the measure developed by Raman et al. (1995), $r\,(18) = .74$, $p < .01$.

(> .30), and clarity. In addition, there was strong internal consistency in the scales for measuring emotion approach ($\alpha = .83$), emotion avoidance ($\alpha = .84$), and the total need for affect (approach minus avoidance; i.e., avoidance reverse-scored; $\alpha = .87$). As expected, the approach and avoidance scales were significantly negatively correlated, $r(322) = -.39$, $p < .001$.[2]

In the next phase of our research, however, we discovered that 3 of the 29 items possessed low inter-item correlations. We therefore omitted these items from our final scale, which contained 13 items to assess the motivation to approach emotions, and 13 items to assess the motivation to avoid emotions. All of our analyses used these 26 items to calculate the need for affect.

Confirmatory factor analyses. We replicated the observed factor structure in several confirmatory factor analyses of responses from our Phase 1 participants. Nonetheless, to make use of all of our available evidence, we describe here the results of confirmatory factor analyses across all of the samples in our research ($N = 880$). Using these data, we tested whether a two-factor (approach and avoidance) solution yields a better empirical fit than a one-factor solution. If our confirmatory factor analysis supported the two-factor model, it would be valid to calculate subscales for measuring emotion approach and emotion avoidance and, if these motivations were significantly negatively correlated, the total need for affect. In contrast, if the two-factor model did not significantly improve fit, it would be appropriate to calculate only the total need for affect.

Our confirmatory factor analyses were calculated using the Maximum-Likelihood Solution. As expected, results indicated that the two-factor model fit the data significantly better than the one-factor model, $\chi^2(1) = 1176.96, p < .001$, and there was a significant negative correlation between the two latent factors, $r(878) = -.48, p < .001$. Table 1 shows the loadings of the items on their respective factors. In addition, the model yielded a good fit, SRMR = .07, RMSEA = .06. (Hu & Bentler, 1999,

2. Although effects of gender are discussed later in this paper, we note here that the two-factor solution was replicated in the subsample of women and in the subsample of men. In addition, the relations between the need for affect and criterion variables were similar for men and women across studies.

Table 1
Factor Loadings for the Need for Affect Questionnaire

Item	Approach	Avoidance
(18). It is important for me to be in touch with my feelings.	.75	—
(6). I think that it is important to explore my feelings.	.74	—
(5). I am a very emotional person.	.60	—
(19). It is important for me to know how others are feeling.	.58	—
(4). Emotions help people get along in life.	.57	—
(15). Strong emotions are generally beneficial.	.55	—
(3). I feel that I need to experience strong emotions regularly.	.53	—
(7). I approach situations in which I expect to experience strong emotions.	.51	—
(24). I feel like I need a good cry every now and then.	.49	—
(20). I like to dwell on my emotions.	.47	—
(13). We should indulge our emotions.	.46	—
(26). I like decorating my bedroom with a lot of pictures and posters of things emotionally significant to me.	.45	—
(17). The experience of emotions promotes human survival.	.44	—
(10). I do not know how to handle my emotions, so I avoid them.	—	.72
(8). I find strong emotions overwhelming and therefore try to avoid them.	—	.69
(11). Emotions are dangerous—they tend to get me into situations that I would rather avoid.	—	.64
(9). I would prefer not to experience either the lows or highs of emotion.	—	.60
(1). If I reflect on my past, I see that I tend to be afraid of feeling emotions.	—	.51
(25). I would love to be like "Mr. Spock," who is totally logical and experiences little emotion.	—	.50
(2). I have trouble telling the people close to me that I love them.	—	.49
(14). Displays of emotions are embarrassing.	—	.48
(12). Acting on one's emotions is always a mistake.	—	.47
(23). I am sometimes afraid of how I might act if I become too emotional.	—	.45
(22). Avoiding emotional events helps me sleep better at night.	—	.43
(21). I wish I could feel less emotion.	—	.39
(16). People can function most effectively when they are not experiencing strong emotions.	—	.32

Note. The numbers in parentheses represent the item numbers in the questionnaire. The factor loadings were obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis of participants' responses across all of our samples. In this analysis, the loadings of the approach items on the avoidance factor and the loadings of the avoidance items on the approach factor are constrained to zero.

indicate that SRMR and RMSEA fit statistics should be near or below, .08 and .05, respectively.)

Importantly, however, the presence of shared method variance across all items can produce a better fit for the two-factor model than would occur if this shared method variance were extracted (Green, Goldman, & Salovey, 1993; Zeller & Carmines, 1980). To control for this possibility, we retested whether the two-factor model produced better fit than the one-factor model, while extracting shared method variance across all of the items in both models. The shared method variance was extracted by mapping all of the items onto a single factor (see, e.g., Jarvis & Petty, 1996). Results again indicated that the two-factor model fit the data significantly better than did the one-factor model, $\chi^2(1) = 32.19, p < .001$, and the two-factor (plus method) model yielded a good fit, SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .05.

Phase 2: Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Given the support for our predicted factor structure, we examined the convergent and discriminant validity of the need for affect scale. That is, we attempted to demonstrate that scores obtained from the measure of need for affect are reliably related to individual differences in the intensity and quality of emotional experiences, need for cognition, cognitive style, general appetitive and aversive motivations, and basic dimensions of personality.

In general, we predicted a positive relation between the need for affect and scales assessing people's tendency to experience, explore, communicate, and use their emotions to guide behavior, and a negative relation between the need for affect and scales assessing the lack of emotions or avoidance of emotions. In addition, because people who generally experience positive emotions should be more motivated to seek emotions than people who tend to experience less positive emotions, we expected a positive relation between trait positive affectivity and the need for affect. In contrast, some individuals may chronically experience negative affect, perhaps because of stressful life events or other individual differences. Such frequent experience of negative affect should taint people's desire to pursue emotions in the first place, resulting in a negative relation between trait negative affectivity and the need for affect.

We expected positive relations between the need for affect and individual difference variables that entailed forming strong evaluations,

being open to uncertainty or new experiences, or behaving in accordance with an appetitive motivation, because these processes can lead to a variety of emotions (e.g., excitement, fear). No predictions were formed for the relation between the need for affect and the need for cognition because there were reasons to expect a negative, null, or positive relation between these two needs. On the one hand, popular folklore suggests that people who approach emotions are less calm and calculating, suggesting that the need for affect and the need for cognition are negatively related. On the other hand, effortful cognitive tasks should involve at least a moderate amount of emotion (e.g., frustration, joy), yielding a positive relation between these needs. Alternatively, the distinct nature of the affective and cognitive systems could cause a null relation between the need for affect and the need for cognition. We were interested in discovering which of these hypotheses obtained empirical support.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Participants were 252 psychology undergraduates (186 women and 66 men), who participated for course credit. Participants took part individually or in groups of up to 20 people. They were told that they would be completing a series of surveys and that all responses would be anonymous. One of these surveys was the Need for Affect Questionnaire that was developed from our pilot research.

The 252 participants include three different samples that were run at separate times over a 2-year period. One sample of participants ($N = 99$) was given the measure of the need for affect, a measure of the need for cognition (Cacioppo, Petty, & Kao, 1984), a measure of socially desirable responding (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964), and six measures relating to feeling and thinking: need to evaluate (Jarvis & Petty, 1996), need for closure (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), personal need for structure (Thompson, Naccarato, & Parker, 1989), repression-sensitization (Epstein & Fenz, 1967), alexithymia (Taylor et al., 1985), and affect intensity (Larsen & Diener, 1987). A second sample ($N = 121$) was given the measure of the need for affect and measures of affective orientation (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1990), positive and negative affectivity (Watson et al., 1988), ambivalence toward emotional expressiveness (King & Emmons, 1990), sensation-seeking (Zuckerman, 1994), behavioral activation and inhibition (Carver & White, 1994), and basic dimensions of personality (e.g., neuroticism; Costa & McCrae, 1991). To establish test-retest reliability for the measure of the need for affect, a third sample of participants ($N = 32$)

completed the measure at two different points in time, along with several filler measures. In all three samples, the order of the measures was randomized across participants.

RESULTS

Properties of the Need for Affect Scales

Central tendency, spread, and internal relations. Participants across all three samples possessed higher scores on the emotion approach scale (M = 15.85; SD = 10.38; Range = –17 to 38) than on the emotion avoidance scale (M = –9.24; SD = 12.57; Range = –35 to 31). Thus, total need for affect was above the midpoint (0) of the scale (M = 25.20; SD = 18.95; Range = –44 to 72). All three scales had good internal consistency (αs > .80). In addition, as expected, there was a significant negative correlation between emotion approach and emotion avoidance, $r(247) = -.36$, $p < .001$.

Test-retest reliability. The sample of 32 participants (27 women and 5 men) completed the Need for Affect Questionnaire at two points in time, from 1 week to 2 months apart. Correlations between the first and second sessions were high for the total scale, $r(30) = .85$, $p < .001$, the emotion approach scale, $r(30) = .94$, $p < .001$, and the emotion avoidance scale, $r(30) = .77$, $p < .001$. Thus, participants' scores were stable over time.

Correlations With the Need for Affect

The correlations with the need for affect are reported in Table 2, alongside the descriptive statistics for each individual difference measure. The relations involving emotion approach and emotion avoidance are shown in Table 4. For the sake of brevity, however, our discussion here focuses on the results for the total need for affect. We return to the distinction between emotion approach and emotion avoidance in the General Discussion.

Emotional ability and style. As shown in Table 2, results indicated no significant correlation between repression-sensitization and the need for affect. As expected, however, results indicated significant positive

Table 2
Individual-Difference Variables: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations With the Total Need for Affect

Measure	*M*	*SD*	*r*
Individual Differences in Affect			
Repression-sensitization	44.15	4.19	.10
Affect intensity	156.51	21.66	.27*
Affective orientation	70.81	11.37	.58*
Positive affectivity	35.02	5.69	.36*
Negative affectivity	22.01	6.95	–.25*
Ambivalence over emotional expressiveness	81.89	18.44	–.46*
Alexithymia: Distinguish feelings from bodily sensations	28.91	8.94	–.28*
Alexithymia: Describe feelings	18.03	4.73	–.40*
Alexithymia: Daydreaming	9.67	3.88	–.34*
Alexithymia: Willingness to analyze problems and emotions	12.95	3.56	–.25*
Individual Differences in Cognitive Style			
Need for cognition	90.09	17.32	.21*
Need to evaluate	52.86	10.57	.17†
Need for closure	155.13	20.47	–.29*
Personal need for structure	40.11	8.90	–.35*
Individual Differences in Behavioral Activation and Inhibition			
Behavioral inhibition	22.33	3.48	–.10
Behavioral activation: Drive	10.98	2.06	.22*
Behavioral activation: Fun	12.14	2.18	.39*
Behavioral activation: Reward	17.46	2.00	.29*
Sensation-seeking	19.83	6.54	.20*
Individual Differences in Personality			
Neuroticism	36.35	8.76	–.22*
Extroversion	42.42	6.56	.36*
Openness	40.84	6.69	.29*
Agreeableness	42.97	6.35	.24*
Conscientiousness	44.47	6.79	.12
Social Desirability	50.89	4.84	–.04

Note. The measures of repression-sensitization, affect intensity, alexithymia, need for cognition, and the cognitive styles were administered to Sample 1 in Phase 2 (*N*s = 87–98); the measures of affective orientation, positive affectivity, negative affectivity, ambivalence over emotional expressiveness, behavioral inhibition, behavioral activation, sensation seeking, and the personality dimensions were administered to Sample 2 in Phase 2 (114 < *N*s < 120); *$p < .05$, † $p < .10$.

correlations between the need for affect and affect intensity, affective orientation, and positive affectivity. In addition, there were significant negative correlations between the need for affect and negative affectivity, ambivalence toward emotional expressiveness, and each dimension of alexithymia.[3]

The need for cognition and cognitive styles. Interestingly, as shown in Table 2, the correlation between the need for affect and the need for cognition was significant and positive, suggesting that the need for cognition also involves openness to emotional experiences. Results also indicated a nonsignificant positive correlation between the need for affect and the need to evaluate. Consistent with our predictions, there were significant negative correlations between the need for affect and the need for closure and the need for personal structure.

Behavioral inhibition vs. activation. As shown in Table 2, there were significant positive correlations between the need for affect and the behavioral activation system subscales and sensation-seeking, but no significant correlation with the behavioral inhibition system scale.

Basic dimensions of personality. As shown in Table 2, the need for affect was significantly negatively correlated with neuroticism and

3. Further discussion of the results for positive and negative affectivity may be warranted. Individual differences in positive and negative affectivity may be determined by a variety of personality traits and situational factors (e.g., Heubeck et al., 1994; Tellegen, 1985). In turn, we would suggest that individuals who chronically experience positive emotions may be more open to emotions and more willing to approach emotions of all kinds, whereas individuals who chronically experience negative emotions may be wary of emotions and avoid emotions of all kinds. In contrast, the potential effects of these motivations to approach and avoid emotions can best be examined by observing reactions to identical emotion-eliciting situations, as is done in the second phase of our research.

In addition, it is important to note that the measure of negative affectivity was deliberately designed to exclude emotions that denote depression and loneliness (e.g., blue, gloomy, sad; see Watson, 1988), resulting in a scale that predominantly reflects the experience of anxiety-related emotions (e.g., nervous, guilty, scared) and is strongly correlated with measures of anxiety (Watson et al., 1988). Thus, the results using this scale do not reflect relations between the need for affect and negative emotions per se; rather, they more strongly reflect the relation between the need for affect and the experience of anxiety-related emotions (see also Barrett & Russell, 1999). Different results may occur for other types of negative affect.

significantly positively correlated with extroversion and openness to experience. In addition, the need for affect was positively correlated with agreeableness and nonsignificantly correlated with conscientiousness. Interestingly, a simultaneous regression analysis revealed that the personality dimensions together explained only a small portion of the variance in the need for affect: $R^2 = .18$, $F\ (5, 109) = 4.72$, $p < .001$.

Socially desirable responding. As expected, the need for affect did not correlate significantly with responses to the Social Desirability Scale (see Table 2).

DISCUSSION

As expected, the need for affect scales were internally consistent and exhibited good test-retest reliability. Also as expected, the need for affect was significantly related to a variety of other individual-difference measures of affective processes, supporting the measure's convergent validity. For example, the need for affect was positively related to the intensity of emotional experiences and negatively related to alexithymia. The correlation with emotional intensity was consistent with the notion that people who are high in the need for affect are open to experiencing strong emotions, and the correlation with alexithymia was consistent with the hypothesis that people who are high in the need for affect are more aware of emotions, making them more adept at understanding and utilizing their emotions. Nevertheless, the total need for affect shared no more than 34% of the variance with any of the other individual differences in affect. On average, only 11% of the variance was shared between the need for affect and the other affect variables, confirming our expectation that the need for affect is distinct.

In addition, there were interesting relations between the need for affect and the other individual difference variables. First, the positive correlation between the need for affect and the need for cognition indicates that people who seek emotions also tend to seek and enjoy effortful cognitive endeavors, contradicting some common assumptions. Second, the correlations with measures of cognitive style revealed a tendency for people who are high in the need for affect to be more open to uncertainty and a lack of structure, perhaps because emotions are likely to be experienced in uncertain and unstructured contexts. Third, the correlations with measures of behavioral activation revealed that, as expected, people who

are high in the need for affect tend to experience higher levels of appetitive motivation than people who are low in this need. Moreover, this finding was consistent with the significant correlation between the need for affect and extroversion, because extroversion taps the behavioral activation system (Carver & White, 1994). In general, our findings indicate that the need for affect has broad relevance to personality theory.

Phase 3: Predictive Validity

We conducted three studies that examined the predictive validity of the Need for Affect Questionnaire. These studies examined the ability of our scale to predict three variables: attitude extremity, choice of emotional versus unemotional films, and British participants' reactions to the death of Princess Diana. The rationale for examining these variables was straightforward. Theoretically, people who are high in the need for affect should be more inclined to possess extreme attitudes toward controversial issues because forming extreme attitudes is one way in which people can experience emotions. In addition, people who are high in the need for affect should be more inclined to view films that are emotionally involving because such films provide an opportunity for emotional experience. Also, because people who are high in the need for affect should become more involved in real-life emotional events, we expected that British people who are high in the need for affect would have been more motivated to react emotionally to the death of Princess Diana, to think about her death, and to perform behaviors relevant to her death.[4] Furthermore, because this event made salient predominantly negative emotions, we expected that participants who were high in the need for affect would

4. This prediction is consistent with the suggestion that affect, cognition, and behavior tend to act synergistically (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, 1998). That is, it is difficult to possess many feelings on an issue without also being able to identify beliefs and behaviors that are consistent with one's feelings. This synergism should occur for many reasons: people occasionally feel a need to justify their behaviors using their thoughts and feelings (e.g., Festinger, 1957); people may spontaneously form attributions that explain their feelings (e.g., Schacter & Singer, 1962); and people often base their feelings about an issue on their beliefs about it (e.g., Carlson, 1956). Such synergistic processes may be particularly likely to occur for real-life, involving issues, such as the death of Princess Diana. Therefore, it has been argued that the tri-partite distinction cannot necessarily be applied to all attitude topics, although this distinction has considerable heuristic value (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

report reactions that were more negative than would participants who were low in the need for affect.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Participants were 273 psychology undergraduates (173 women and 100 men), who participated for course credit. They took part individually or in groups of up to 20 people, and they were told that they would be completing a series of surveys. The experimenter stated that the surveys pertained to a variety of topics and that all responses would be anonymous.

The 273 participants include 3 different samples that were run at separate times over a 2-year period. All of the samples received the Need for Affect Questionnaire, a demographic information sheet, and various filler measures. In addition, one sample of participants ($N = 69$) was given a measure of the need to evaluate and a measure of attitude extremity. A second sample ($N = 116$) was given a measure that assessed participants' willingness to view emotional films and an item that asked participants to indicate their favorite television show. A third sample consisted of 88 British participants who completed an open-ended measure of affective, behavioral, and cognitive reactions to the death of Princess Diana, the need for cognition (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982), and the need to evaluate (Jarvis & Petty, 1996); these measures were obtained less than 2 months following Princess Diana's death. In each sample except the second (see below), the order of these measures was randomized across participants. Following their participation, participants were probed for suspicion and debriefed.

Attitude extremity. Participants were asked to indicate their attitudes toward 30 controversial issues, which were modeled after the issues used in a previous study (Maio, Roese, Seligman, & Katz, 1996). Examples of the controversial issues are abortion, censorship, euthanasia, feminism, genetic engineering research, and violent television programming. Participants rated their attitudes toward each issue using a 9-point scale from –4 (*extremely unfavorable*) to 4 (*extremely favorable*). Attitude extremity for each item was determined by calculating the absolute value of the difference between participants' responses and 0, the neutral point on the scale (see Wegener, Downing, Krosnick, & Petty, 1995). For each participant, a total index of attitude extremity was computed by averaging the participant's attitude extremity across items.

Willingness to view emotional versus nonemotional films. After presenting the individual-difference measures (e.g., need for cognition), the experimenter stated that she was planning a study that would ask the participants to view several film clips. She claimed that she had collected data about the interest level

and emotional nature of each film clip and that the participants might later be recruited for the study that would present the films. Therefore, she wanted participants to read the information about each film and rate their willingness to view each film.

Participants were then presented with information about eight films. For each film, there were three lines describing the extent to which the film was interesting, happy, and sad; participants rated their willingness to view the film using a 7-point scale from 0 (*not at all*) to 6 (*extremely*). Across the eight films, the descriptions varied in a 2 (interest level: mildly vs. extremely) × 2 (happiness: not at all vs. extremely) × 2 (sadness: not at all vs. extremely) design.

To supplement our measure of participants' interest in emotional films, participants were asked to indicate their favorite television show. Two raters independently coded the amount of emotion in participants' favorite television show, using a 5-point scale from 0 (*not at all emotional*) to 4 (*extremely emotional*). Seventy television shows were rated, and the correlation between the raters' coding of these shows was highly significant, $r(68) = .86$, $p < .001$. The raters discussed and resolved any discrepancies.

Affective, behavioral, and cognitive reactions to the death of Princess Diana. Participants' affective, behavioral, and cognitive reactions to the death of Princess Diana were measured using an open-ended technique that has been employed successfully in past research (e.g., Esses, Haddock, & Zanna, 1993; Esses & Maio, in press). Specifically, using three separate pages, participants listed their emotions, behaviors, and beliefs regarding Princess Diana's death and the events surrounding her death. After indicating a particular set of reactions (e.g., emotions), participants were asked to go back and rate the valence of each reaction as they experienced it, using a rating scale from –3 (*extremely negative*) to +3 (*extremely positive*). This open-ended technique has the advantage of eliciting personal, episodic responses to the issue at hand (see Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1994). This feature makes the open-ended measure particularly useful for the assessment of past behavior because it is difficult for participants to spontaneously manufacture past behaviors they have not actually performed (Esses & Maio, in press). Using participants' responses, we calculated the number of affective, behavioral, and cognitive reactions that were reported by each person. In addition, for each participant, we calculated the net valence across the participant's affective, behavioral, and cognitive reactions.

RESULTS

Attitude Extremity

As shown in Table 3, attitude extremity was positively correlated with the need for affect. Of interest, attitude extremity was also positively

Table 3
Criterion Measures: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations With the Total Need for Affect

Measure	*M*	*SD*	*r*
Attitude extremity	2.21	.42	.38*
Willingness to view emotional vs. unemotional films	3.75	3.32	.19*
Willingness to view happy vs. neutral films	5.98	4.74	.18†
Willingness to view sad vs. neutral films	1.52	4.67	.09
Emotionality of favorite television show	2.07	0.91	.13
Number of emotions regarding Princess Diana's death	4.53	1.76	.42*
Number of behaviors regarding Princess Diana's death	3.06	1.58	.39*
Number of cognitions regarding Princess Diana's death	4.38	2.10	.31*
Valence of reactions to Princess Diana's death	–3.56	12.38	–.30*

Note. Attitude extremity was examined in Sample 1 ($N = 67$) of Phase 3; preferences for emotional films and television shows were examined in Sample 2 of Phase 3 (Ns = 99–111); reactions to the death of Princess Diana were examined in Sample 3 of Phase 3 ($N = 88$). *$p < .05$, †$p < .10$.

correlated with the need to evaluate, $r(65) = .26$, $p < .05$. These correlations show that the need for affect predicts attitude extremity, while also replicating prior findings that the need to evaluate predicts attitude extremity (Jarvis & Petty, 1996).

We then tested whether the need for affect and the need to evaluate independently predicted attitude extremity by conducting a regression analysis in which both variables were entered as simultaneous predictors of attitude extremity. Results indicated distinct effects of the need for affect, $\beta = .35$, $t(64) = 3.02$, $p < .01$, and to a lesser extent the need to evaluate, $\beta = .20$, $t(64) = 1.73$, $p < .10$.

Willingness to view emotional versus nonemotional films. We first tested whether the tendency to prefer films that were happy and sad over nonemotional films would be greater for people who are high in the need for affect than for people who are low in the need for affect. To test this hypothesis, we subtracted participants' willingness to view the two (interesting and noninteresting) films that were neither happy nor sad from their willingness to view the two (interesting and noninteresting) films that were both happy and sad. We then examined the correlation between this score and the need for affect. As shown in Table 3, results indicated a significant positive correlation with the need for affect. (Similar correlations were obtained when we separately examined the

low interest and high interest films.) Thus, as predicted, the increased willingness to view the emotional films over nonemotional films was greater for participants who were high in the need for affect than for participants who were low in the need for affect.

In addition, we subtracted participants' total willingness to view the four films that contained no happy content from their total willingness to view the four films that contained happy content. We then examined the correlation between this score and the need for affect. As shown in Table 3, results again indicated a positive correlation, which was significant using a one-tailed test ($p < .04$). Analyses of participants' willingness to view the sad films revealed a similar pattern, but the correlation was not statistically significant.[5]

We also examined the correlation between the emotionality of participants' favorite television shows and their need for affect. Results indicated a positive correlation with the need for affect, but the correlation did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance (see Table 3).

Affective, behavioral, and cognitive reactions to the death of Princess Diana. As shown in Table 3, the need for affect was positively correlated with the number of emotions, behaviors, and cognitions that participants experienced after the death of Princess Diana. In addition, analysis of the net valence ratings revealed that, as expected, participants who were high in the need for affect were more likely to report negative reactions than were participants who were low in the need for affect.

Neither the need for cognition nor the need to evaluate significantly predicted the number of affective, behavioral, and cognitive reactions to the death of Princess Diana. We also conducted regression analyses that examined the unique effects of the need for affect, the need to evaluate, and the need for cognition on the numbers of emotions, behaviors, and cognitions that participants experienced. For each criterion variable (e.g., number of emotions), the effect of the need for affect was significant,

5. We also used a general linear model regression analysis to examine the effects of the need for affect, interest level, happiness, and sadness on willingness to view the films. Consistent with the findings reported in the text, results indicated that the manipulation of happy content interacted with the need for affect, such that participants who were high in the need for affect were more willing to view the happy films than were participants who were low in the need for affect.

βs > .34, *p*s < .001, whereas the effects of the need to evaluate and the need for cognition were nonsignificant, all *p*s > .15.

Interestingly, the need for cognition was significantly related to the valence of participants' reactions, $r(83) = -.27$, $p < .05$. However, a simultaneous regression analysis revealed that the need for affect predicted the valence of participants' reactions, $\beta = -.37$, $p < .001$, independently of the need to evaluate, $\beta = -.19$, *ns*, and the need for cognition, $\beta = -.23$, $p < .03$.

DISCUSSION

As expected, compared to participants who were low in the need for affect, participants who were high in the need for affect (a) possessed attitudes that were more extreme, (b) were more willing to view emotional films, and (c) reported a greater number of emotions, behaviors, and beliefs related to the death of Princess Diana. Participants who were high in the need for affect also exhibited more negative reactions to the death of Princess Diana, which fit the nature of the emotional event. Thus, the need for affect exhibited predictive validity across a diverse set of criterion measures.

Also, in those samples in which we included the measures of the need to evaluate or the need for cognition, the need for affect accounted for unique variance in the criterion measures. For example, although participants who were high in the need to evaluate possessed attitudes that were more extreme than did participants who were low in the need to evaluate, the need for affect predicted attitude extremity independently of the need to evaluate. Thus, the need to evaluate did not account for the ability of the need for affect to predict attitude extremity.

Interestingly, however, the need for affect predicted the motivation to seek positive emotions (from happy films), but the relation between the need for affect and the tendency to seek negative emotions (from sad films) did not reach statistical significance. We suspect that these findings occurred because our design gave participants a choice between approaching positive or negative emotions, and because film stimuli may elicit only fleeting emotions that are easy to escape. In this context, it is rational that most individuals would approach positive emotions more than negative emotions. In contrast, if negative emotions alone were salient, the need for affect may have been a significant predictor of willingness to experience these emotions. In addition, if these emotions

were more involving, there should have been more reason for some people to avoid them.

The examination of British participants' reactions to the death of Princess Diana enabled us to test this reasoning, because this event presented a real-life emotion-inducing situation that was likely to elicit negative feelings in our participants. We expected that participants who were high in the need for affect would be more motivated to react emotionally to her death, think about her death, and perform behaviors relevant to her death, because such reactions would help them experience, contemplate, and create relevant emotions. In addition, because this event made salient predominantly negative emotions, we expected that participants who were high in the need for affect would report reactions that were more negative than would participants who were low in the need for affect. These predictions were supported.

Supplementary Analyses

Across studies, our participants varied in gender, age, and culture. Consequently, we examined the relation between the need for affect and each of these variables across all of our studies. With regard to gender, we expected that women would exhibit higher levels of the need for affect than would men. Indeed, the effect across studies was significant, $t(841) = 9.38$, $p < .001$, and large in magnitude, $d = .69$. This finding is consistent with our hypothesis that women exhibit higher levels of need for affect than men. Of course, various explanations for this effect are possible (e.g., feminine sex roles, genetic determinants) and could be tested in future research.

We made no predictions about the relation between the need for affect and age because many competing predictions seemed plausible. Interestingly, however, age was significantly negatively correlated with the need for affect, $r(834) = -.11$, $p < .005$. This relation suggests that the need for affect may decrease with age. However, our sample lacked an even representation of people across age groups (i.e., most participants were 18–21 years of age). Thus, future research should further investigate the relation between the need for affect and age using a wider age range.

Finally, because we collected data from British participants and Canadian participants, we tested whether the need for affect was different across these cultures. Interestingly, participants from Britain exhibited

higher need for affect (M = 26.09, SD = 20.20) than participants from Canada (M = 22.69, SD = 19.34), t (844) = 2.03, $p < .05$.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Principal Findings

Overall, our findings indicate that there are meaningful differences in the extent to which people seek emotions. The results of the first phase of the research provided support for the proposed dimensionality of our individual-difference measure of the need for affect. The second phase of the research supported the construct validity of our measure of the need for affect by showing that the measure is distinct from other individual-difference measures of affective and cognitive processes, while being meaningfully related to them. In addition, we found that the need for affect is positively related to the need for cognition, contradicting the popular belief that "feelers" are not "thinkers." In the third phase, evidence for predictive validity was obtained. Compared to participants who were low in the need for affect, participants who were high in the need for affect were more likely to (a) possess extreme attitudes, (b) indicate a high willingness to view emotional films, and (c) exhibit many reactions to the death of Princess Diana. These results affirmed the measure's importance and validity. Finally, our supplementary analyses supported our prediction that women possess a higher need for affect than do men.

Effects of Emotion Approach and Emotion Avoidance

Because of the abundant research distinguishing approach and avoidance motivations (e.g., Hull, 1952; Lewin, 1951; Miller, 1959; see also Higgins, 1997), the Need for Affect Questionnaire included questions about both the approach and avoidance of emotions. Although inclinations to approach emotions and avoid emotions should be negatively related on average, we also expected that these inclinations would be at least somewhat distinct. Indeed, findings from our confirmatory factor analysis supported this two-factor approach, while revealing a negative relation between the factors.

Nonetheless, factor analyses of scale items alone cannot address the distinctness of the approach and avoidance dimensions. For example, it could be argued that our two-factor-plus-method model is open to alternative interpretation. Specifically, the general method factor may be relabeled as a substantive, theoretical factor (i.e., need for affect), and the other two factors may be relabeled as method factors that tap the direction of item wording (e.g., Russell, 1996; Tornás & Oliver, 1999; cf. Jarvis & Petty, 1996).

As described by Zeller and Carmines (1980), correlations with external variables must be considered to determine whether different factors are indeed distinct.[6] Thus, it is important to examine whether emotion approach and emotion avoidance possessed somewhat different correlates across studies. The relations involving emotion approach and emotion avoidance are shown in Table 4. As shown in the table, the emotion approach scale was uniquely correlated with individual differences in affect intensity, alexithymia in the willingness to explore emotions, the need for cognition, the need to evaluate, the need for closure, and the reward dimension of behavioral activation. In contrast, the emotion avoidance scale was uniquely correlated with individual differences that reflect the tendency to struggle with (vs. seek) anxiety-related thoughts and emotions (neuroticism, negative affectivity, repression-sensitization, sensation-seeking) and difficulties in identifying, describing, and expressing emotions in general (ambivalence over emotional expression, alexithymia in distinguishing and describing feelings). It is particularly interesting that emotion avoidance was related to tendencies to experience aversive, anxiety-related thoughts and emotions, which can be highly distressing. These findings are consistent with the notion that emotion avoidance is important when emotions are strong and involving.

Our examination of participants' reactions to the death of Princess Diana provides further evidence supporting this view. Specifically, the valence of participants' reactions was positively correlated with the motivation to avoid emotions but not significantly correlated with the motivation to approach emotions (see Table 4). That is, participants who were high in the motivation to avoid emotions reported emotions that were less negative than did people who were low in the motivation, further supporting

6. In addition, method variance could be modeled more precisely by simultaneously utilizing responses to items that have been derived using different measurement formats (e.g., adjective checklists, Likeart scales; Green et al., 1993).

Table 4
Individual Difference Variables and Criterion Measures: Correlations and Regression Coefficients for the Relations Between the Need for Affect Subscales

	Need for Affect Subscale				
	Approach		Avoidance		
Measure	*r*	β	*r*	β	R^2
Individual Differences in Affect					
Repression-sensitization	–.19	–.36*	–.32*	–.45*	.21
Affect intensity	.46*	.52*	–.04	.16	.22
Affective orientation	.55*	.46*	–.42*	–.27*	.37
Positive affectivity	.31*	.25*	–.30*	–.20*	.13
Negative affectivity	.06	.22*	.41*	.49*	.21
Ambivalence over emotional expressiveness	–.11	.10	.59*	.62*	.35
Alexithymia: Feelings vs. bodily sensations	.14	.42*	.55*	.71*	.45
Alexithymia: Describe feelings	–.07	.19*	.56*	.64*	.35
Alexithymia: Daydreaming	–.38*	–.35*	.21*	.06	.15
Alexithymia: Analyze problems/emotions	–.36*	–.39*	.09	–.07	.13
Individual Differences in Cognitive Style					
Need for cognition	.26*	.25*	–.11	–.01	.07
Need to evaluate	.26*	.28*	–.04	.07	.07
Need for closure	–.39*	–.40*	.12	–.05	.15
Personal need for structure	–.27*	–.18†	.31*	.24*	.12
Individual Differences in Behavioral Activation and Inhibition					
Behavioral inhibition	.25*	.40*	.34*	.47*	.26
Behavioral activation: Drive	.19*	.15	–.17†	–.12	.05
Behavioral activation: Fun	.28*	.17†	–.37*	–.30*	.16
Behavioral activation: Reward	.38*	.37*	–.15†	–.02	.14
Sensation-seeking	.06	–.03	–.26*	–.26*	.06
Individual Differences in Personality					
Neuroticism	.11	.28*	.40*	.49*	.23
Extroversion	.28*	.21*	–.31*	–.23*	.13
Openness	.26*	.20*	–.23*	–.17†	.09
Agreeableness	.17†	.10	–.22*	–.19*	.06
Conscientiousness	.13	.13	–.07	–.03	.02

Table 4
(Continued)

	Need for Affect Subscale				
	Approach		Avoidance		
Measure	*r*	β	*r*	β	R^2
Criterion Measures					
Attitude extremity	.25*	.16	–.35*	–.30*	.15
Willingness to view emotional vs. unemotional films	.23*	.24*	–.06	.00	.06
Willingness to view happy vs. neutral films	.22*	.23*	–.07	.00	.05
Willingness to view sad vs. neutral films	.11	.11	–.02	–.01	.01
Emotionality of favorite television show	.27*	.32*	.05	.14	.09
Number of emotions regarding Diana's death	.46*	.44*	–.26*	–.04	.21
Number of behaviors regarding Diana's death	.43*	.41*	–.24*	–.03	.18
Number of cognitions regarding Diana's death	.36*	.37*	–.18	.01	.13
Valence of reactions to Diana's death	–.16	.03	.37*	.38*	.13

Note. The relations involving repression-sensitization, affect intensity, alexithymia, need for cognition, and the cognitive styles were obtained from Sample 1 in Phase 2 (*N*s = 87–98); the relations involving affective orientation, positive affectivity, negative affectivity, ambivalence over emotional expressiveness, behavioral inhibition, behavioral activation, sensation seeking, and the personality dimensions were obtained from Sample 2 in Phase 2 ($114 < N\text{s} < 120$); the relations involving attitude extremity were obtained from Sample 1 (*N*s = 67) in Phase 3; the relations involving willingness to view emotional films and television shows were obtained from Sample 2 in Phase 3 (*N*s = 99–111); the relations involving reactions to the death of Princess Diana were obtained from Sample 3 in Phase 3 ($N = 88$). The Beta coefficients and R^2 statistics were obtained from regression analyses that included emotion approach and emotion avoidance as simultaneous predictors of each individual-difference or criterion variable.
*$p < .05$, †$p < .10$.

the speculation that the motivation to avoid emotions is uniquely related to the extent to which people avoid distressing, anxiety-related emotions. However, given that the motivation to avoid emotions did not predict the willingness to view sad films, this motivation appears to emerge especially when the negative emotions are real and involving. That is, potential emotional experiences might have to exceed a specific threshold to arouse the motivation to avoid emotions. Future research could further explore this

hypothesis, perhaps by using real-time measures of emotional experience and experimental investigations of emotion utilization.

Overall, then, these results affirm the importance of assessing emotion approach and emotion avoidance, in addition to the total need for affect. Conceptually, all three variables are important because there is a strong conceptual relation between the total need for affect and both emotion approach and emotion avoidance. Empirically, emotion approach and emotion avoidance are correlated and share many relations with other variables, whereas several correlates are distinct. Thus, it seems productive to examine the total need for affect *and* its two components to most fully understand emotion-related processes.

Future Research Directions

Overall, the need for affect is relevant to a number of research topics, including many issues outside of the core emotions domain. For example, the correlation with attitude extremity suggests that the need for affect may be relevant to research on attitude function (i.e., the psychological needs that attitudes fulfill; Olson & Zanna, 1993). Past research has tended to focus on the cognitive functions of attitudes, emphasizing the role of cognition in appraisals of attitude objects (see Maio & Olson, 2000). Nevertheless, it is possible that one basic function of attitudes is to enable people to experience affect, because the experience of affect is intrinsically rewarding (Maio & Olson, 2000). Indeed, our finding that the need for affect predicts the extremity of attitudes is consistent with this hypothesis.

In addition, people who are high in the need for affect may be more likely to permit their emotions to influence their attitudes, behavior, and perceptions than are people who are low in the need for affect. Past research has found that the relative contribution of emotions to attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions can vary across individuals, attitude topics, and situational contexts (Eagly et al., 1994; Esses et al., 1993; Forgas, 1995; Schwarz & Clore, 1997), and the need for affect could be one relevant individual-difference variable. In fact, the need for affect may even influence people's social values (e.g., equality, freedom), because values are strongly based in affect (Maio & Olson, 1998).

The need for affect may also be relevant to research on relationships. For example, one important determinant of relationship satisfaction may be the extent to which couples are matched in their need for affect.

Relationship dissatisfaction may occur when one person feels that his or her partner is not meeting emotional needs. In heterosexual relationships, relationship dissatisfaction frequently occurs when the female partner believes that the male partner is not fulfilling her emotional needs (see Duncombe & Marsden, 1995). Men's difficulty in meeting these needs may arise from their lower levels of emotional expressiveness (Kring & Gordon, 1998) and from their lower need for affect.

In fact, the need for affect is relevant to any research that investigates emotional processes. For example, it would be interesting to examine the effects of experimental manipulations of mood for people who have high and low levels of the need for affect. Because people who are high in this need should have developed more awareness of emotions, they may possess more cognitive associations with their emotions than people who are low in this need. As a result, mood may have more widespread effects for people who are high in this need. This and other hypotheses about the need for affect can be examined using a variety of operationalizations, including self-reports, direct observations of behavior, measures of implicit cognition and implicit affect, and psychophysiological techniques.

CONCLUSIONS

In sum, our research has revealed that there are important individual differences in the pursuit of emotions. Some people seek out emotions, whereas others do not. Indeed, this individual difference *must* play an important role in human social functioning, because emotions are at the core of our reasoning and social behavior (Damasio, 1994). Without the desire to embrace strong emotions, we would be bereft of a considerable source of energy and direction. Put simply, despite the long-held assumption that people avoid strong emotions, emotion is the wind that fills our sails. The need for affect reflects people's willingness to extend their sails and capture this wind.

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