

aging and emotion regulation



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April 3, 2009
Lifespan Conference



the
Emotion Lab

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supported by NIA grants R03 AG22168 & R01 AG026323

older adults report positive affective lives

sample empirical findings

positive affect

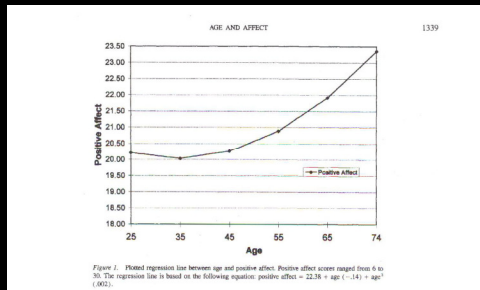


Figure 1. Plotted regression line between age and positive affect. Positive affect scores ranged from 6 to 30. The regression line is based on the following equation: positive affect = 22.38 + age (-.14) + age² (.002).

negative affect

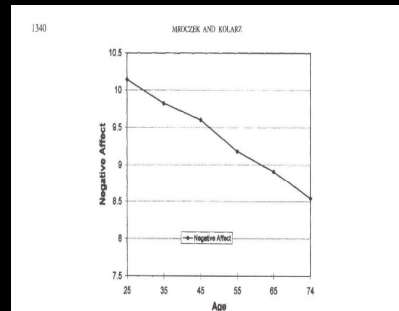


Figure 2. Plotted regression line between age and negative affect. Negative affect scores ranged from 6 to 30. The regression line is based on the following equation: negative affect = 10.94 + age (-.03).

Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998

conceptual framework

socioemotional selectivity theory
(Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles,
1999):

limited time → prioritization of emotional
goals and emotion regulation

older adults feel good because they
prioritize emotion regulatory goals

how do older adults interact with
the world to produce such
positive affective experience?

older adults may use their information processing to help them feel good

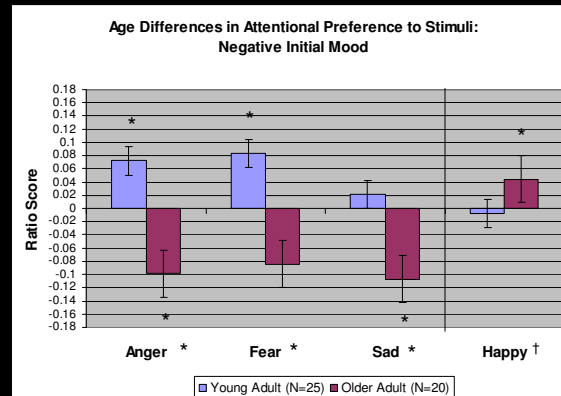
socioemotional selectivity and the “**positivity effect**” (Carstensen et al., 1999; Carstensen & Mikels, 2005)

limited time → prioritization of emotional goals and emotion regulation → **processing preference for positively-valenced over negatively-valenced material (in service of emotion regulation)**

eye tracking



older adults activate positive gaze preferences when in bad moods



Isaacowitz et al. (2008) *Psychological Science*.

is this true for all older adults?

individual differences matter as well

positive gaze preferences only help **some**
older adults feel better

depends on how well their attentional
system is functioning

for example, older adults with good
executive control can stave off mood
declines by looking more at happy faces

Isaacowitz et al. (2009) under review.

conclusions and future directions

aging may bring with it improved emotion
regulation, and the ability to use looking as a
tool of regulation, but this is not true for
everyone

studying mood change in real-time can provide a
window into how regulation takes place, and
whether that varies by age