

# Let me help you improve your mood – it may be good for me too



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## Introduction

- Managing emotions of social partners is known as *extrinsic emotion regulation*.
- In this process, individuals attempt to manage or influence the emotions felt by their social partners by using different strategies.
- Individuals' preferences for different extrinsic emotion regulation strategies may be closely linked with the quality of their social experiences.

## Research Questions

- Which extrinsic emotion regulation strategies are associated with positive social experiences (receiving social support, encouragement, companionship)?
- And are these associations different for older people compared to younger people?

## Method

- Five hundred and eighty participants, aged aged 18 – 87 years, ( $M=50.04$ ,  $SD=18.13$ ).
- Online survey with hypothetical scenarios depicting a social partner experiencing negative emotion.
- Participants indicated the strategies they would use in an attempt to improve their partner's negative emotion.
- Participants also responded to survey items regarding the quality of their social experiences.

## Results

- Age influenced the associations between some strategies and quality of social experience.
- Younger people who used higher levels of situation modification (actively making changes to a problem situation) to reduce the social partner's negative emotion, also reported higher levels of positive social experiences.
- However, older people who used higher levels of situation modification strategies did not report more positive social experiences.

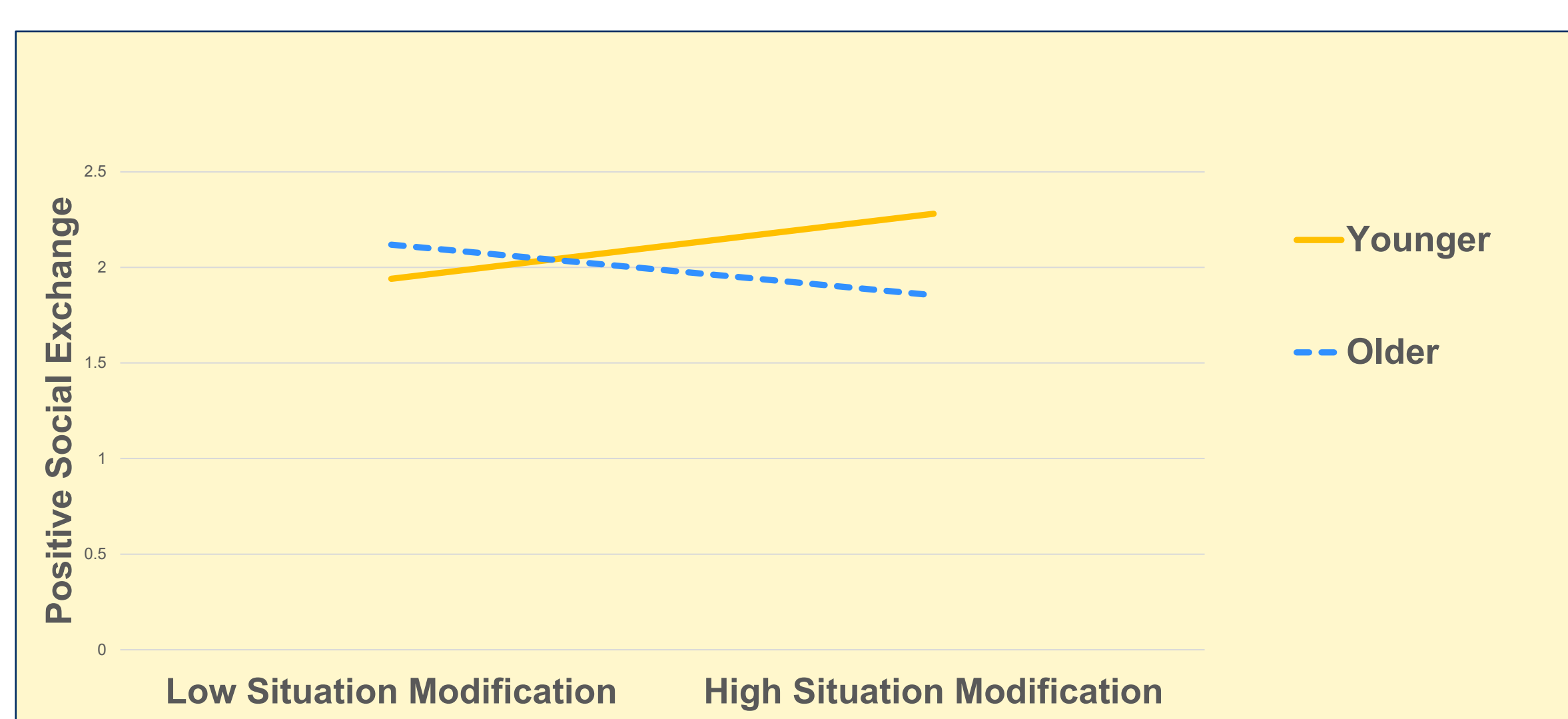


Figure 1. Interaction of Situation Modification with Age in the prediction of Positive Social Experiences

- Older people who who used higher levels of cognitive change strategies (suggesting alternative ways to look at a problem situation to help change the social partner's perspective) to reduce the social partner's negative emotion, also reported higher levels of positive social experiences.
- However, younger people who used higher levels of cognitive change strategies did not report more positive social experiences.

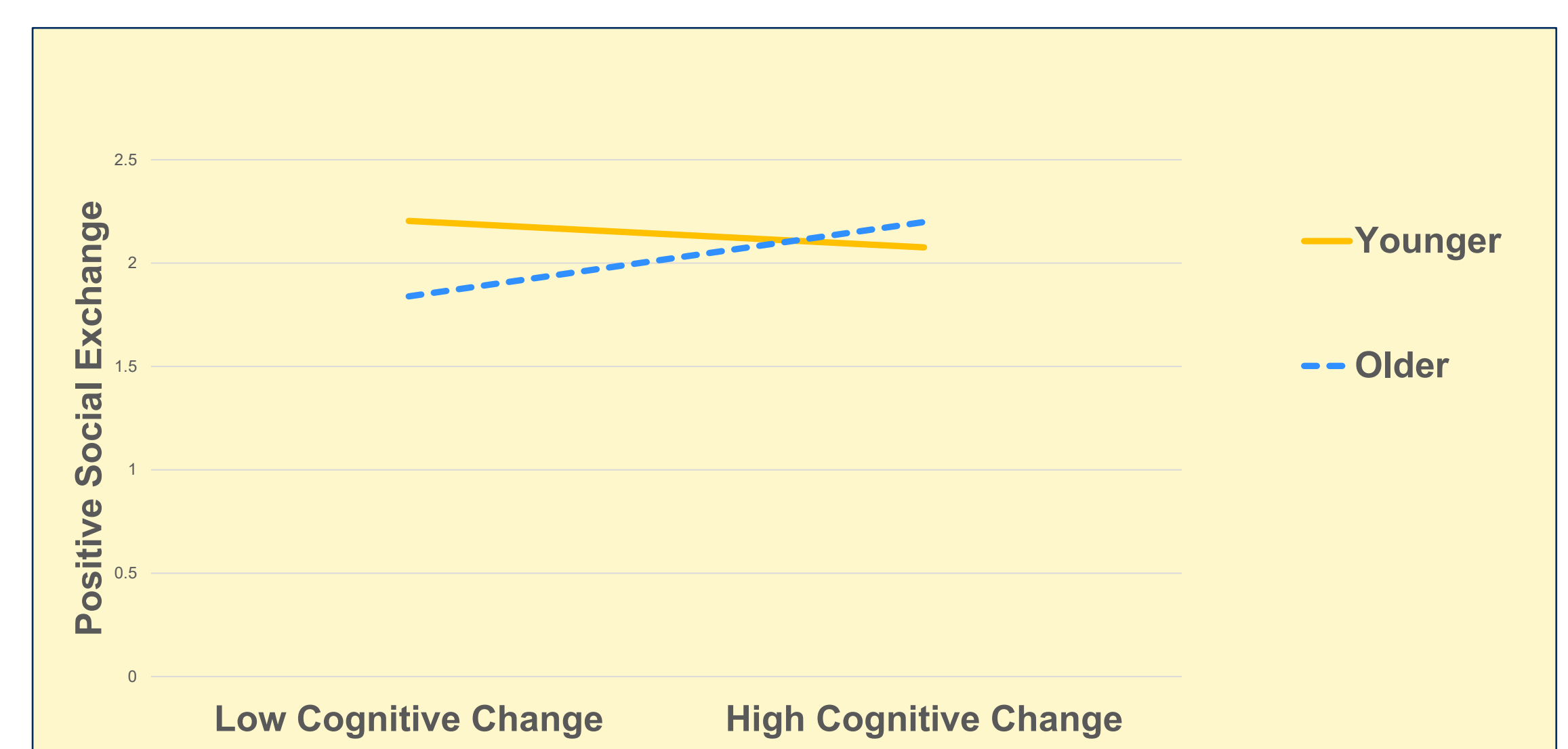


Figure 2. Interaction of Cognitive Change with Age in the prediction of Positive Social Experiences

## Conclusions

- For younger adults, higher levels of active extrinsic emotion regulation strategies (situation modification) were associated with positive social experiences.
- Consistent with younger adults using more assimilative coping (modifying the environment in order to accomplish goals).<sup>1</sup>
- For older adults, higher levels of less resource-dependent strategies (cognitive change) were associated with positive social experiences.
- Consistent with older adults utilising more accommodative coping as they age (changing their goals to accommodate circumstantial constraints).<sup>1</sup>
- People may respond more positively to passive strategies such as cognitive change when they come from older and 'wiser' social partners, whereas they expect more active regulatory efforts (i.e. situation modification) from younger social partners.

### References

- Brandtstädter, J. (2009). Goal pursuit and goal adjustment: Self-regulation and intentional self-development in changing developmental contexts. *Advances in Life Course Research*, 14(1-2), 52-62

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