



# Make a Bucket List: The Age Difference in Life Goal Prioritization under a Limited Time Perspective

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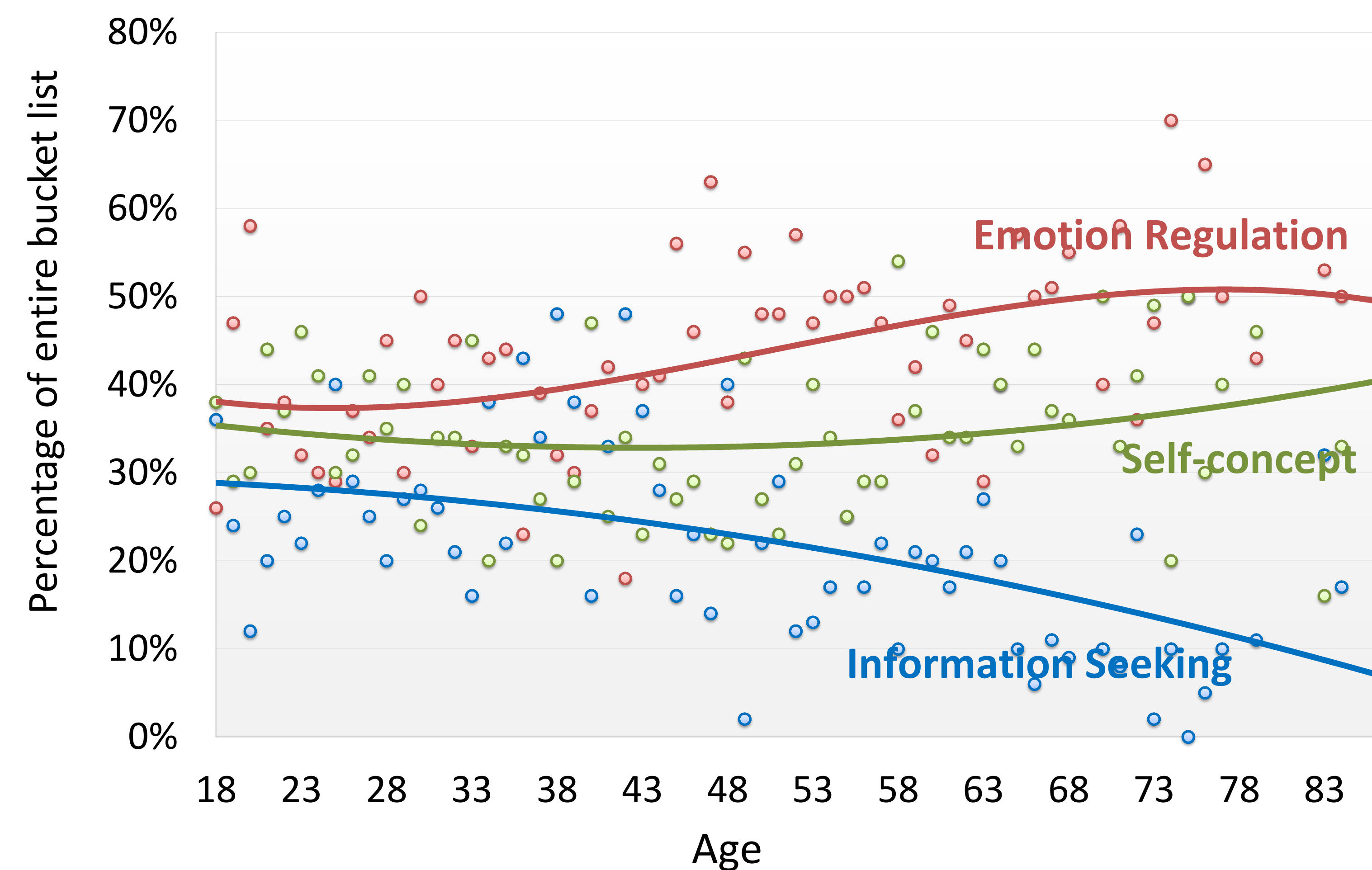
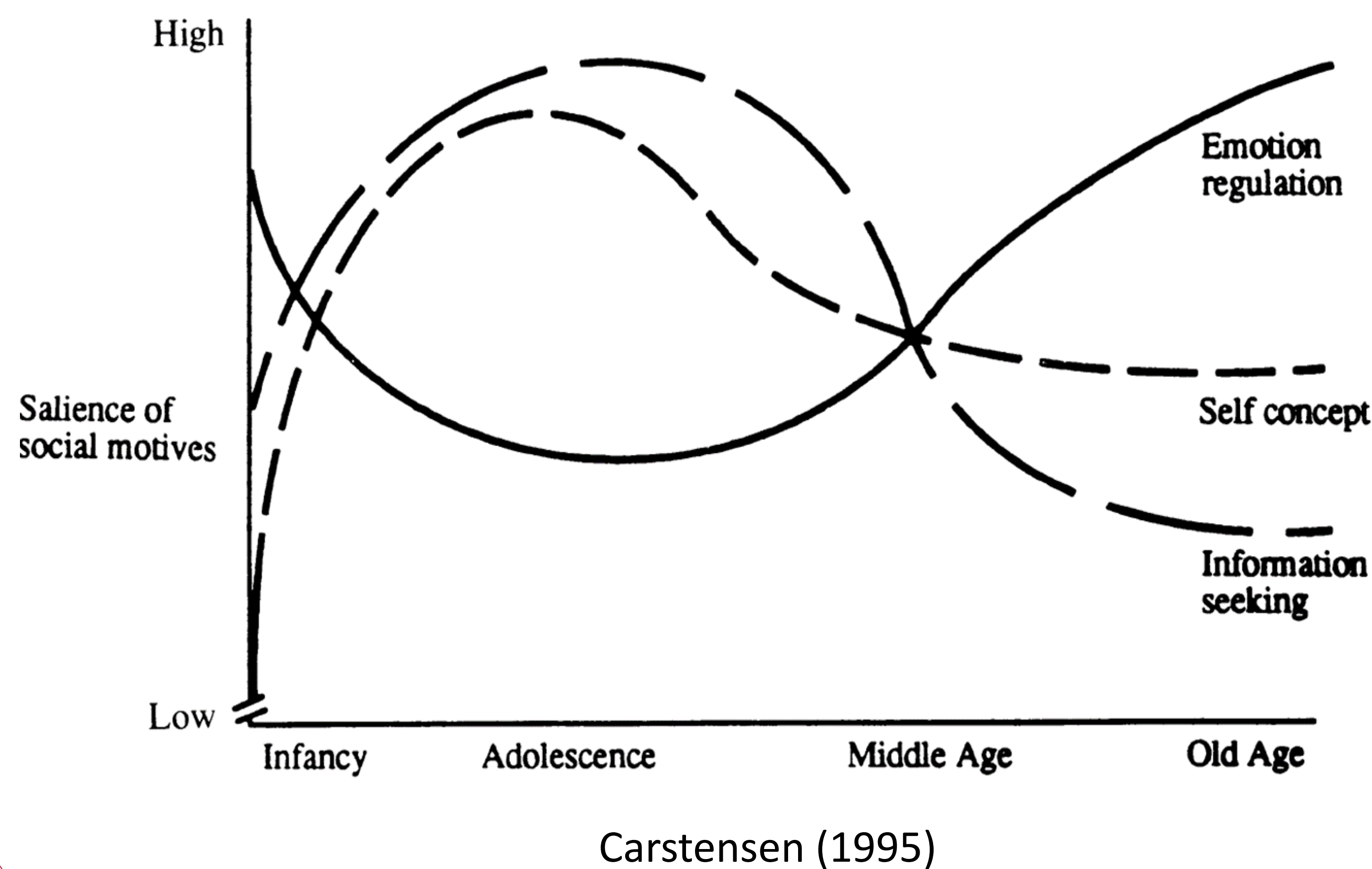
## Theoretical Background

- Lifespan developmental theories suggest the presence of three primary social motives throughout life: information seeking, emotional well-being and the maintenance of self-concept. The salience of these social motives change at different life stages, as an effect of age-related changes in future time perspective (e.g. Carstensen et al., 1999).
- Consistent with this theory, research on social interactions suggest no age difference in social motives when time perspective is constrained across age groups (e.g., Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990; Fung et al. 1999). However, little is known about the meaningful goals people pursue when their lifetime is limited, and how these meaningful goals reflect age difference in social motives.
- In the present study, we investigated the goals people pursue when imagining they had only six months to live. In particular, we were interested in how these goals reflect social motives and whether there are age difference in the salience of social motives.

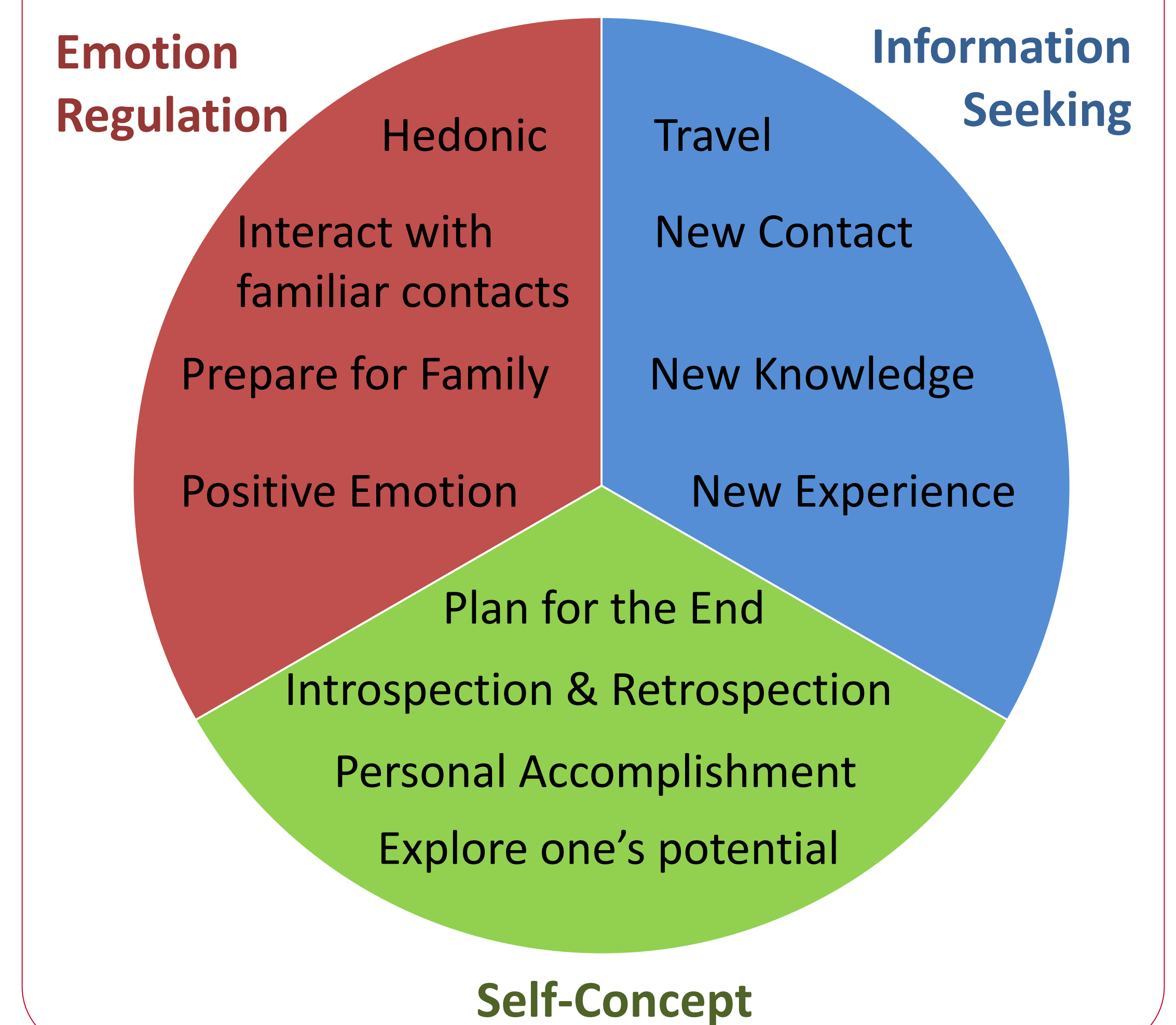
## Method

- Participants were recruited from (a) Community; and (b) Amazon Mechanical Turk.
  - N=332; 18-87 years old ( $M=44.1$ ,  $SD=16.3$ ); 58.7% female.
  - Three age groups: Young (18-35 yrs); Middle-aged (36-54 yrs); and old (55-87yrs)
- In the web-based study:
  - Participants were asked to imagine they had only six months to live, and listed at least 8 things they wanted to do or accomplish within the last six months.
  - Based on the Socio-emotional Selectivity theory (Carstensen et al., 1999), data were coded in three categories: information seeking, emotion regulation and maintenance of self-concept.

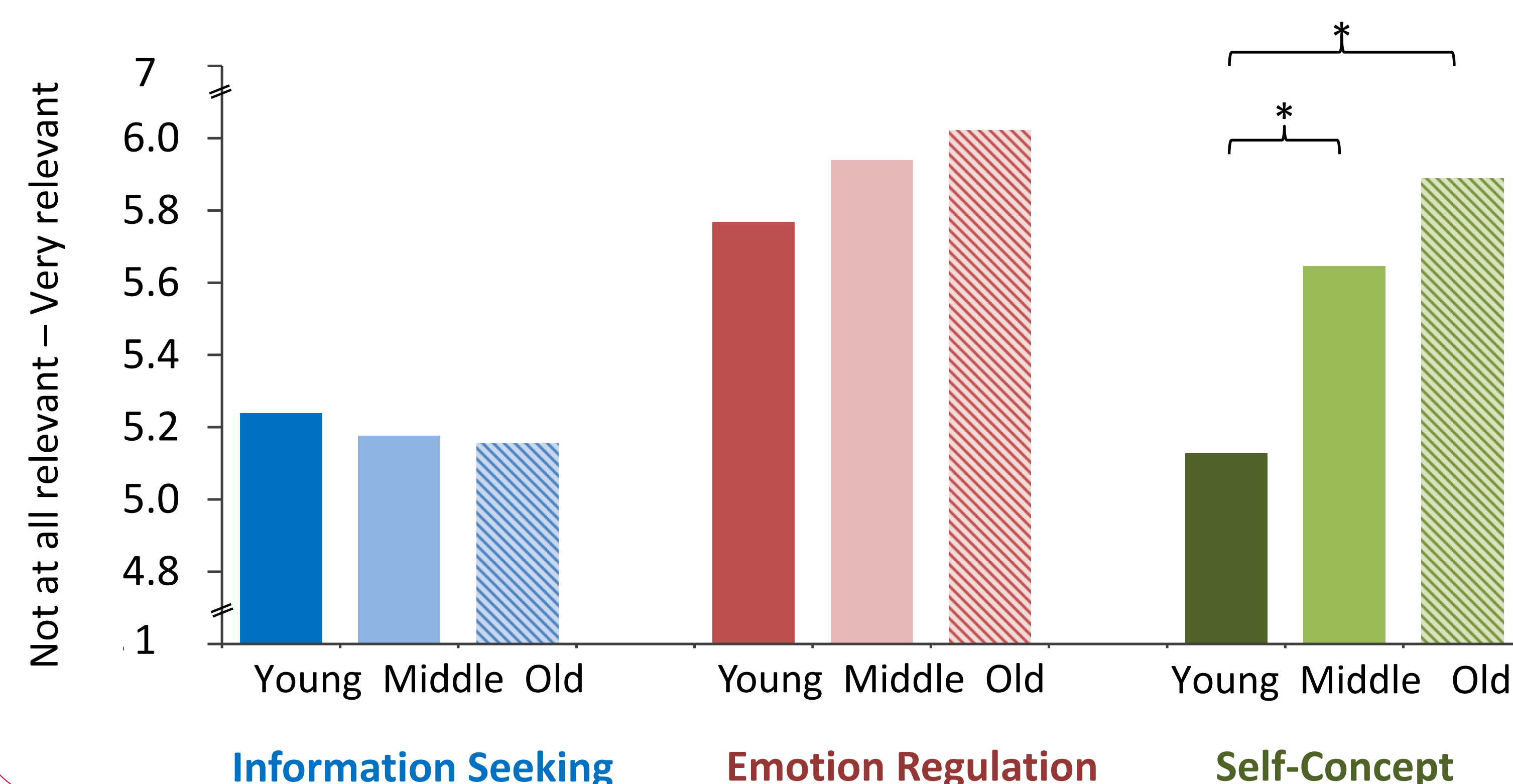
## Idealized and Empirically Found Age Difference in Social Motives



## Coding Scheme at a Glance



## Relevance Rating Related with Age and Psychological Constructs



Partial Correlations Controlling for Age

	Information Acquisition	Emotion Well-being	Self-concept
Extraversion	.08	.23**	.11
Agreeableness	.03	.10	.06
Conscientiousness	-.01	.04	-.01
Neuroticism	-.04	-.09	-.03
Openness	.14*	.13*	.03
Depression	-.02	-.03	-.08
Positive Affect	.07	.20**	.09
Negative Affect	-.01	.02	-.02

Note. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

## Discussion & Conclusion

- To our knowledge, this is the first study that used life goals to investigate socioemotional selectivity theory based social motives.
- Results indicated that even when future time perspective is constrained across age groups, there are still age differences in percentage and relevance rating of social motives. Such differences may be attributed to age difference in life experiences and life tasks.
- Future research should investigate the age difference in social motives when future time perspective is open-ended, and compare the results with those of constrained time perspective.