

# Developmental trajectories of affects, regulation strategies and personality traits

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## Theoretical context

Affects, regulation strategies, like personality traits are variables that can change with advancing age. First of all we can see an increase of well-being with aging (eg Urry & Gross, 2010). Some regulation strategies are also frequently used with age, as targeted as being relatively effective (eg Carstensen, Gross, & Fung, 1998). Finally the personality is not stable throughout life (Specht, Egloff, & Schmukle, 2011), some traits will become more predominant, such as conscientiousness, while others will decrease as extraversion and neuroticism.

## Issues & Assumptions

The aim is to study the evolution with age of individual characteristics: personality (extraversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness), affects and regulation strategies. We make the following assumptions:

- With age, people are more conscientious, more introverted, more emotionally stable.
- With age, people would feel less negative emotions and more positive affect.
- With age, most individuals would use certain strategies.

## Method

Analyzes on all-comers 216 participants aged 13-80 years (mean age of 38 years, standard deviation of 17 years). The collection is based on a protocol type "Experience Sampling Methodology" (ESM) with 5 responses daily for 14 days to affects and strategies, and a questionnaire for personality.

The affects are operationalized from 12 points Circumplex model's Yik, Russell and Steiger (2011). The strategies are: *problem solving, social support, avoidance, cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression and rumination*. During an interview each participant must summarize each affects and strategies, for an item that seems most prototypical.

Thereafter the participants were solicited by message text to indicate their level of agreement for each of the items appearing on the memo sheet (see Figure 1). The response was in the form of a series of 18 figures on a Likert scale of 5 points.

## Example of a memo card of a participant

Les émotions : en ce moment je me sens...	Les stratégies : depuis le dernier envoi...
1. Pleine d'entrain	13. J'ai réévalué positivement.
2. Lasse	14. J'ai évité de penser.
3. Enthousiaste	15. J'ai contrôlé/ supprimé mes émotions.
4. Déprimée	16. J'ai recherché du soutien.
5. Gaie	17. J'ai ruminé.
6. Insatisfaite	18. J'ai fait face aux problèmes.
7. Sereine	
8. Contrariée	
9. Relaxée	
10. Inquiète	
11. Passive	
12. Surexcitée	

*Veillez répondre selon votre degré d'accord entre 1 pas du tout d'accord et 5 tout à fait d'accord.*

## Results

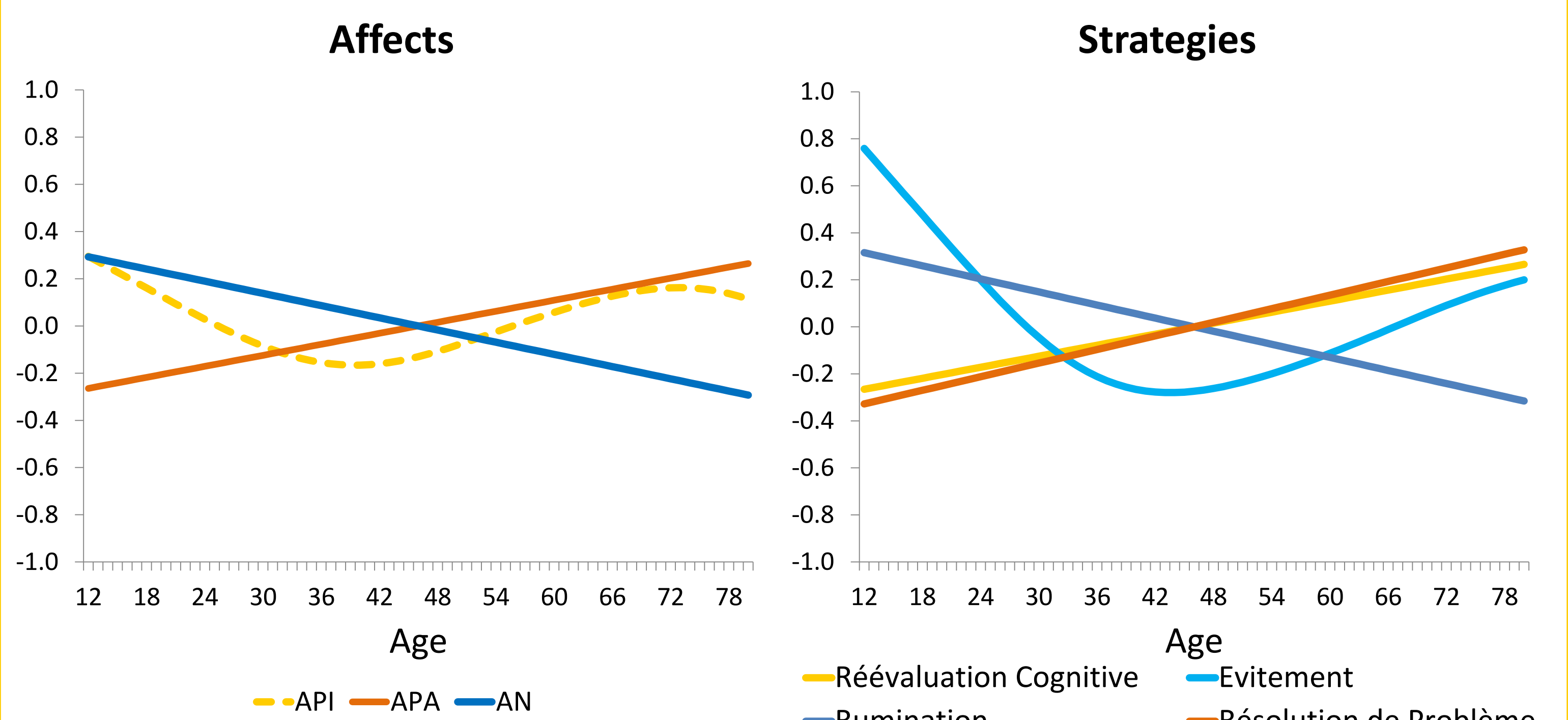
To allow for flexibility in our changing variables with advancing age, we used Generalized Additive Models (GAM package "mgcv" R software).

$$VD \sim (1 | Participant) + s(Age)$$

The results are presented via the graphical representations of the predictions obtained from the estimated models.

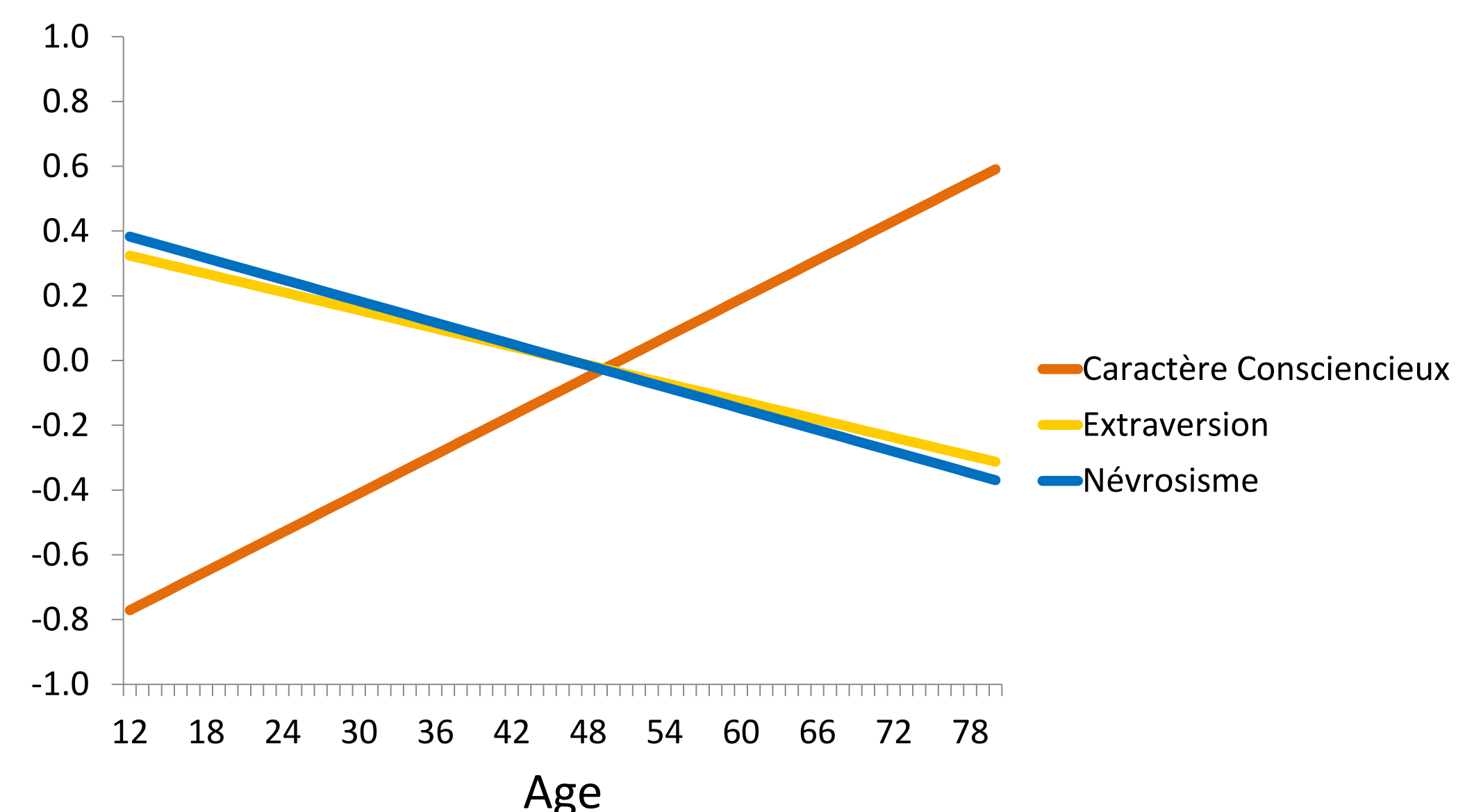
## Affects & Strategies

The 12 affects were summarized in three dimensions by ACP: Negative Affectivity (AN), Active Positive Affectivity (APA) and Inactive Positive Affectivity (API).



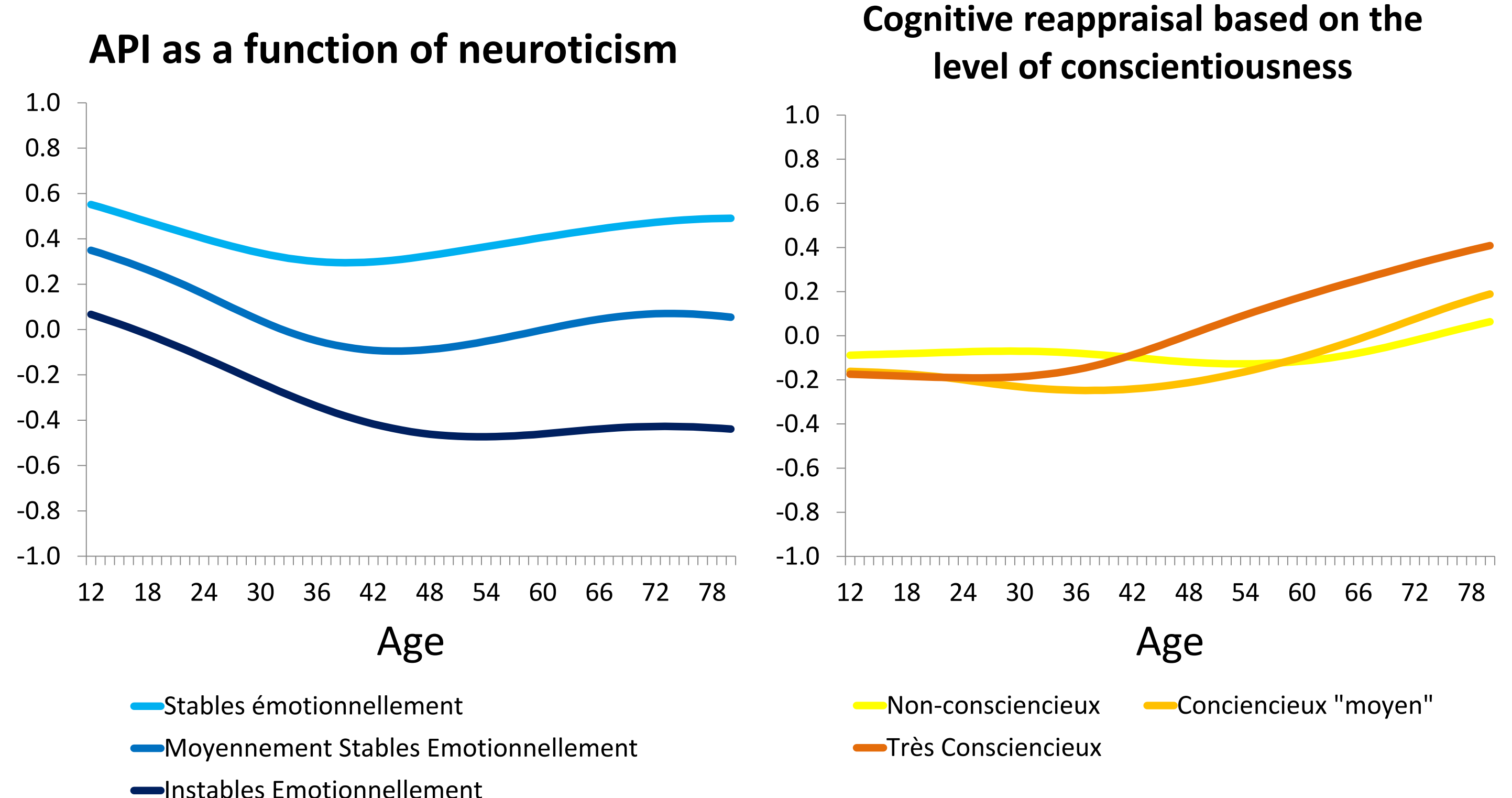
Note : About the affects, API is shown in dotted lines because not significant ( $p = .22$ ), but in the following, with interaction with neuroticism it becomes significant. For strategies, non-significant models were not represented.

## Personality



## Two interactions

$$VD \sim s(Age, Trait-Personality)$$



## Conclusion

- The older adults of the sample feel more joy and happiness than younger adults.
- With increasing age, our participants say they use more cognitive reappraisal and problem solving, and less rumination. The avoidance strategy seems to first be disparaged by young adults up to 40 years before being increasingly used. This last point is made in connection with the socioemotional selectivity theory (Löckenhoff & Carstensen, 2004) and the strengths and vulnerabilities integration (Charles, 2010) who say that with aging, people will seek to avoid threatening situations.
- With advancing age, people become more conscientious, more introverted, more emotionally stable.
- People with high levels of neuroticism will feel less inactive positive with advancing age. And conscientious people will still use the cognitive reappraisal after 40 years than non-conscientious people.