A corpus-based analysis of ongoing change in the adjective amplifier systems of Hong Kong, Indian, and Philippine English

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Phenomenon: Adjective Amplification

(1) It is a very good training (ICE-HK:S1A-022#433:1:A)

(2) I think he 's really nice (ICE-PHI:S1A-083#222:1:C)

(3) It 's so bad (ICE-PHI:S1A-013#204:1:A)

(4) But it's completely different (ICE-IND:S1A-073#48:1:A)

Intensification

Related to the semantic category of *degree* (degree adverbs) and ranges from low (downtoning) to high (amplifiers)

(Quirk et al. 1985: 589–590)

- Amplifiers
  - Boosters, e.g. *very*
  - Maximizers, e.g. *completely*
- Downtoners
  - Approximators, e.g. *almost*
  - Compromisers, e.g. *more or less*
  - Diminishers, e.g. *partly*
  - Minimizers, e.g. *hardly*

Motivation

Amplification

- major area of gramm. change (cf. Brinton and Arnovick 2006: 441)
- crucial for "social and emotional expression of speakers" (Ito and Tagliamonte 2003: 258)
- linguistic subsystem which allows precise circumscription of a variable context (Labov 1972, 1966: 49)
- ideal case for testing mechanisms underlying language change!

Previous Research

Amplification

- substantial amount of corpus-based research on intensification (e.g Aijmer 2011, 2018; Fuchs 2016, 2017; Núñez Pertejo and Palacios 2014; Palacios and Núñez Pertejo 2012)
  → but mostly either focused on individual intensifiers or without regard to the intensified adjectives
- recently amplifier-adjective bigrams have come more into focus (e.g. Schweinberger 2017; Wagner 2017a,b)
- associated with teenage talk and young(ish) (female) speakers
  (Bauer and Bauer 2002; D'Arcy 2015; Macaulay 2006; Tagliamonte 2006, 2008)

Focus

- Amplifying *really* replaces *very* (lexical replacement)

  (see D'Arcy (2015) for NZE; see Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) and Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010) for North East British English, Tagliamonte (2008) and Tagliamonte and Denis (2014) for Toronto English; see Tagliamonte and Denis (2014) for South Eastern Ontario English)

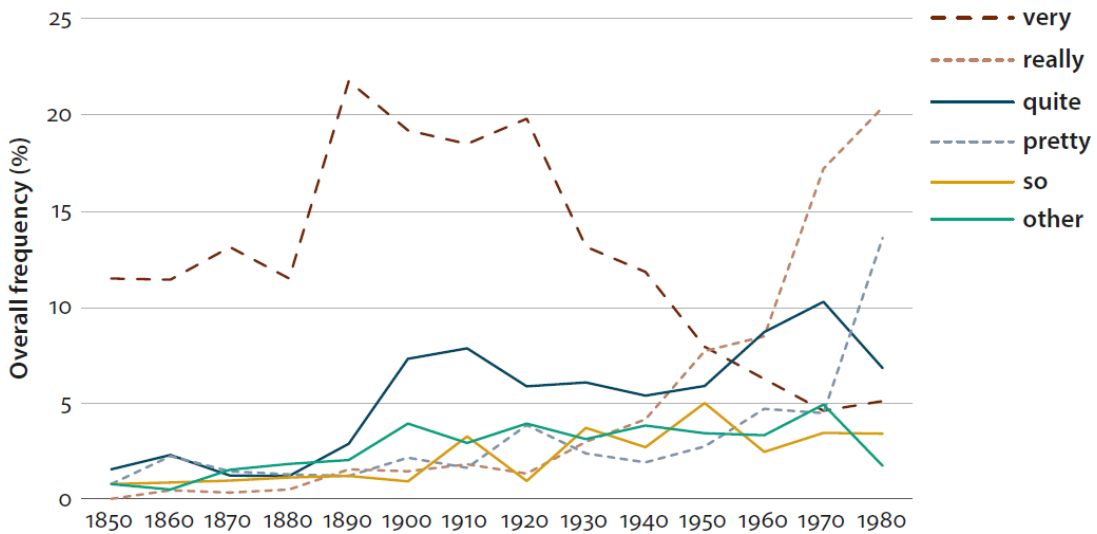

Figure 1: Amplifier variants in NZE across real-time (from D'Arcy (2015: 468))

Research Question

Q

Are Asian Englishes in-line with the trend among traditional L1 and other post-colonial varieties of English in that *very* is being replaced by *really*?

Hypotheses

$H_1 1$

HKE, IndE, PhiE align with other varieties:
really is replacing *very*
as the default adjective amplifier

$H_1 2$

Aligned with AmE/AusE → more advanced
Aligned with GBE → more lagging behind

Data and Methodology

Corpus data: International Corpus of English (ICE)

- Hong Kong, Indian, and Philippine ICE components
- Shared design (allows meaningful comparisons between varieties of English)
- One million words (600,000 spoken and 400,000 written) from diverse spoken and written text types (cf. next slide) with each file containing app. 2,000 words.
- Accompanied by metadata and biodata of speaker (extremely interesting resource for variationist analyses)

Corpus data: International Corpus of English (ICE)

Mode	Conversation type	Register	Text type	Number of text files
SPOKEN (300)	Dialogues (180)	Private (100)	Face-to-face conversations	90
			Phonecalls	10
		Public (80)	Classroom Lessons	20
			Broadcast Discussions	20
			Broadcast Interviews	10
			Parliamentary Debates	10
			Legal cross-examinations	10
			Business Transactions	10
	Monologues (120)	Unscripted (70)	Spontaneous commentaries	20
			Unscripted Speeches	30
			Demonstrations	10
			Legal Presentations	10
		Scripted (50)	Broadcast News	20
			Broadcast Talks	20
			Non-broadcast Talks	10

Data Processing

- Spoken private dialogue section of each component
- Part–of-speech tagged (OpenNLP vis `R`) the
- Retrieved adjectives (PoS–tag JJ)
- Determined whether adjective were preceded by an amplifier (member of a predefined set of amplifiers)
- Sentiment Analysis of adjective types (Jockers 2017)

Data Processing

- Determined if the same amplifier type had occurred within a span of three adjective slots previously ($\rightarrow$ Priming)
- Token freq. of adjective type by age group (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005)
- Removed...
  - negated adjectives
  - comparative and superlative forms
  - adjectives that were not amplified by at least two different amplifier types
  - adjectives that were preceded by downtoners
  - strange forms (e.g. *much*, *many*)

Data Processing

- Semantic classification of adjective (simplified version of Dixon (1977), cf. also D'Arcy (2015); Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005); Tagliamonte (2006, 2008))
- Manual cross–evaluation of automated classification
- Metadata and speaker information

Variable Coding

Dependent Variable(s)				
Variant	categorical	occurrence of pre-adjectival *really, so, very, other*		
Independent Variable(s)				
Age	ordinal	min. young | middle-aged | old	extra	linguistic
Gender	nominal	Female | Male	extra	linguistic
(Education)	nominal	College | NoCollege	extra	linguistic
Priming	nominal	prime | noprime		
Emotionality	categorical	negative | nonemotional | positive	intra	linguistic
Function	nominal	attributive | predicative	intra	linguistic
SemanticCat.	categorical	semantic category of adj.	intra	linguistic
Gradability	numeric	Gradability score based on BNC	intra	linguistic
Adjective	categorical	bad | funny | good | interesting | nice | other	intra	linguistic
Frequency	numeric	Frequency of adj. by age group	intra	linguistic

Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis: options

Model	Dep. var.	Interactions	Nested data	Output	Overfitting
Tree-based models					
Conditional-Inference Tree (CIT)	✓	✓	X	✓	X
Random Forests (RF)	✓	✓	X	X	✓
Regression models					
Multinomial mixed-effects (GLMMM)	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
Logistic mixed-effects (GLMBLM)	X	✓	✓	✓	✓

→ CIT separate GLMBLMs for each variant (not shown today)

Results

Results

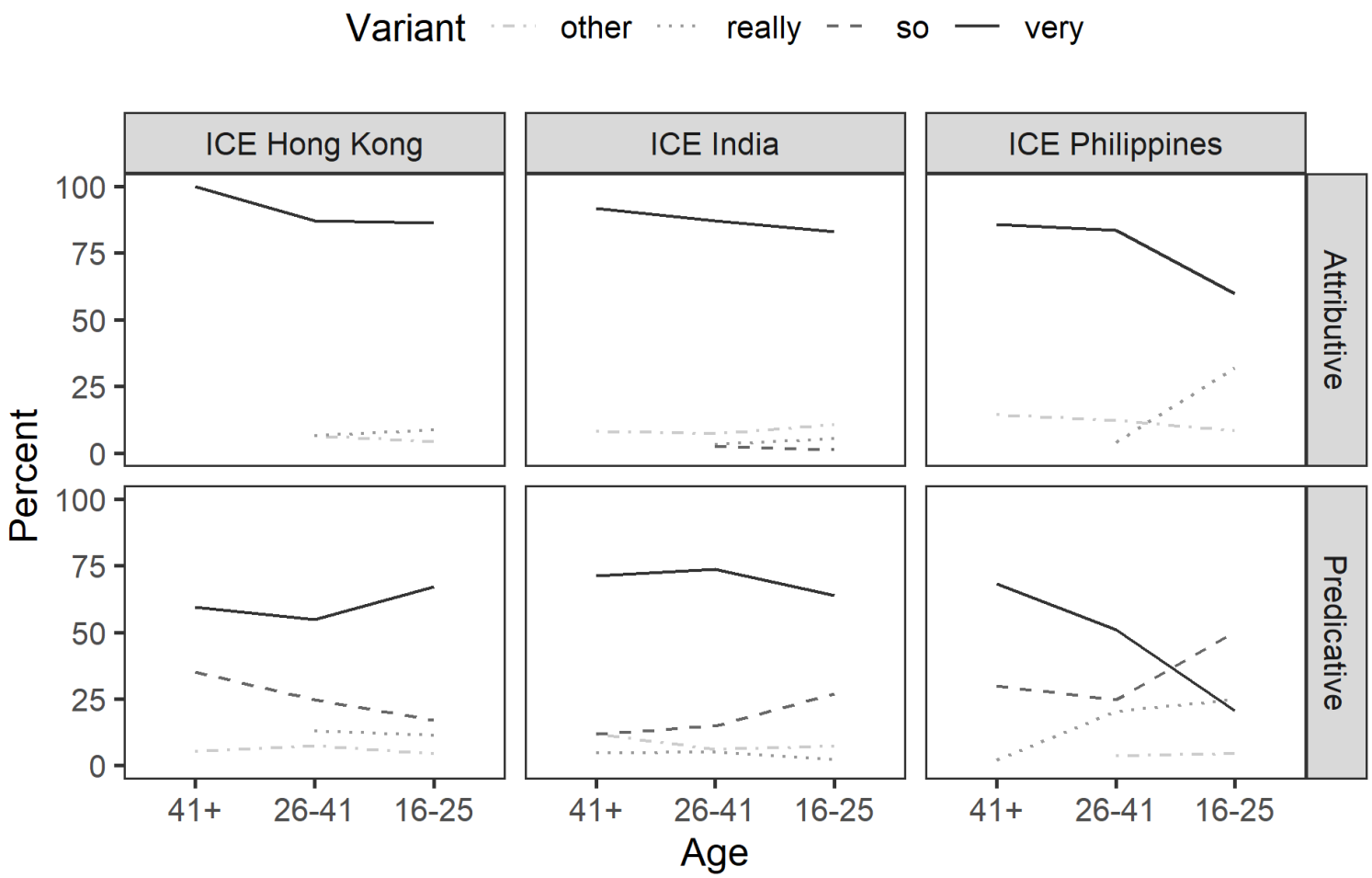

Figure 2: % variants across speaker age by function and corpus.

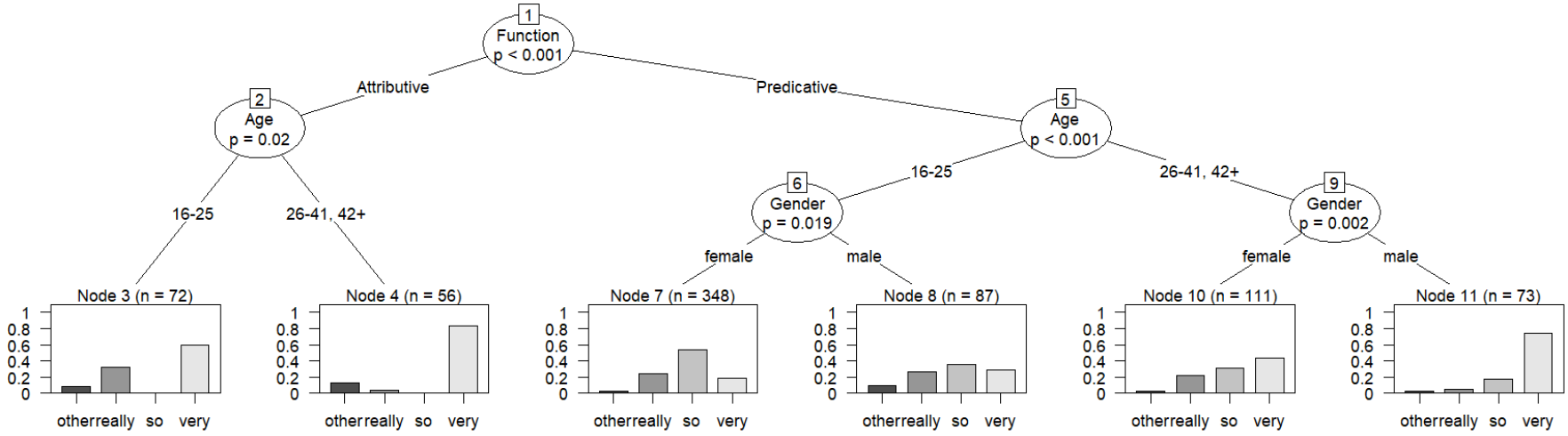

Figure 3: Results of the CIT analysis on ICE-PHI.

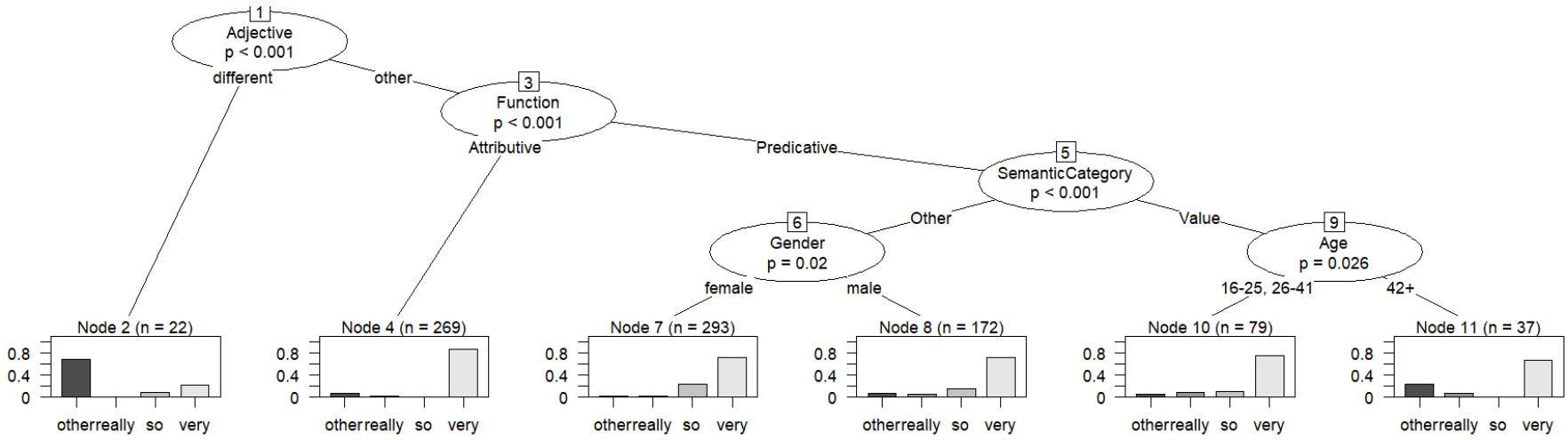

Figure 4: Results of the CIT analysis on ICE-IND.

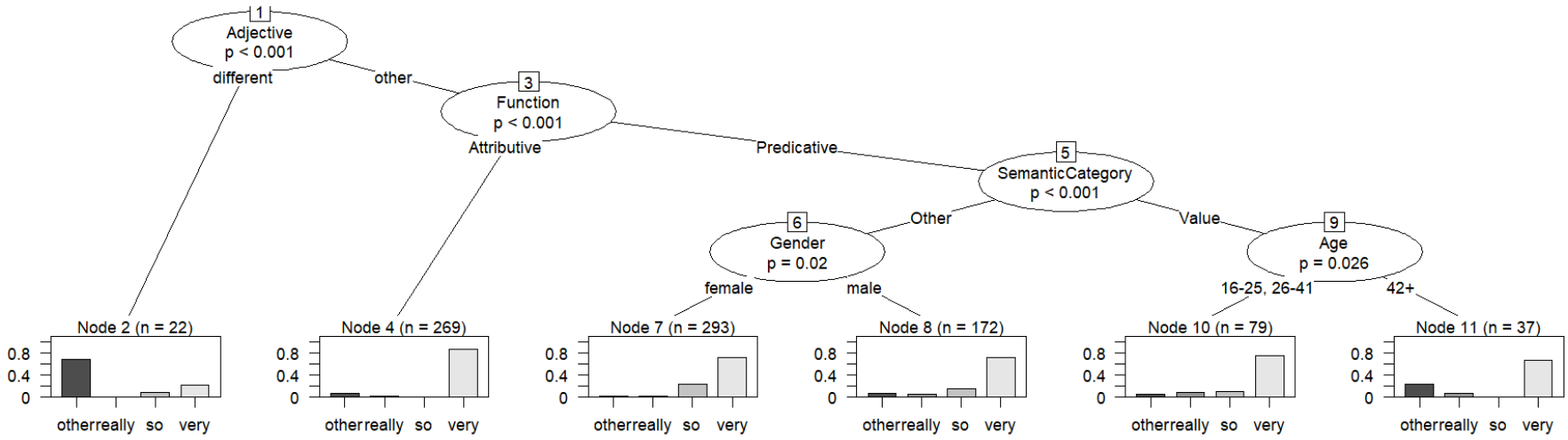

Figure 5: Results of the CIT analysis on ICE-HK.

Discussion & Outlook

Summary

The analysis shows that ...

- the trajectory of change in the adj. amplifier system of PhiE is approximating the trajectories of other varieties (NZE, IrE, AusE, etc.)(see e.g. D'Arcy 2015)
  $\rightarrow$ only PhiE confirms $H_1 1$
- change in PhiE is substantially further advanced compared to HKE and IndE $\rightarrow$ confirmation of $H_1 2$
- during stasis and initial stages of change, intra-linguistic factors dominate
- once change is accelerating, extra-linguistic (social) factors become more important (see Labov 2002)

Discussion

- During initial stages of change, the type of the amplified adjective and its linguistic properties determine amplifier use
- Once an amplifier variant attains social meaning, it will (further) increase in use: linguistic change piggybacks on social stratification

> "Sociolinguistic variation is parasitic upon such linguistic variation. It is an opportunistic process that reinforces social distinctions by associating them with particular linguistic variants. [...] The use of linguistic forms to increase distinctiveness of particular groups is a driving force for the acceleration of change"

(Labov 2002)

Outlook

Could this be a universal mechanism/pattern?

Test if the mechanisms. . .

- can be shown to have worked in analogous changes in English (e.g. 3^{rd} p. sg. ind. morpheme: <eth> → <(e)s>)
- can be shown to have worked in analogous changes in languages other than English

Thank you so, really, very much!

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Appendix

Variationist Sociolinguistics

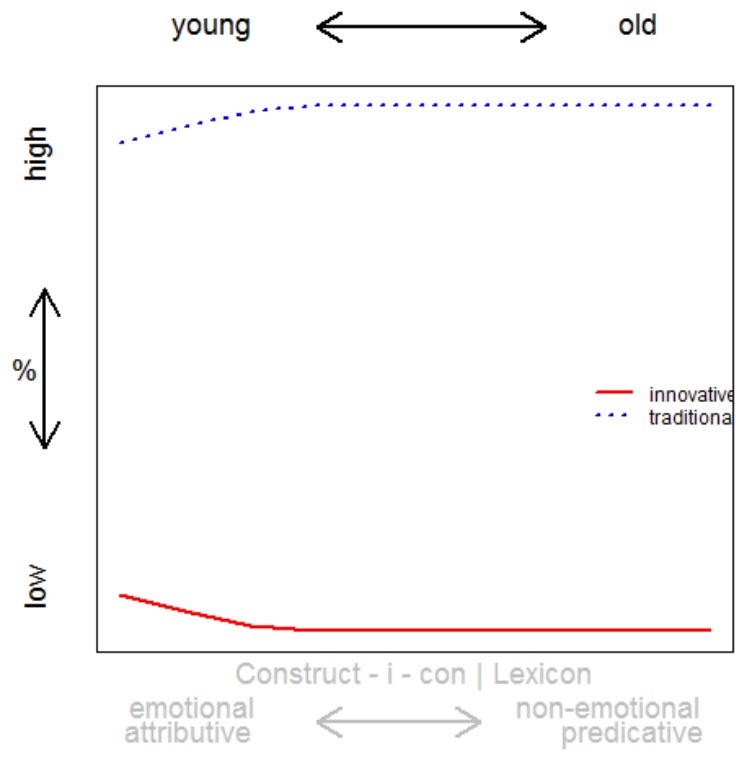
- Language is not homogeneous: variation is ubiquitous
  - Social factors : language use
  - Linguistic variation not random
  - Systematic correlation between certain social factors (age, gender, class, ethnicity, etc.) and language use
- Linguistic differentiation $\leftrightarrow$ social stratification

Diffusion of Innovations

young ⟷ old

upper

working



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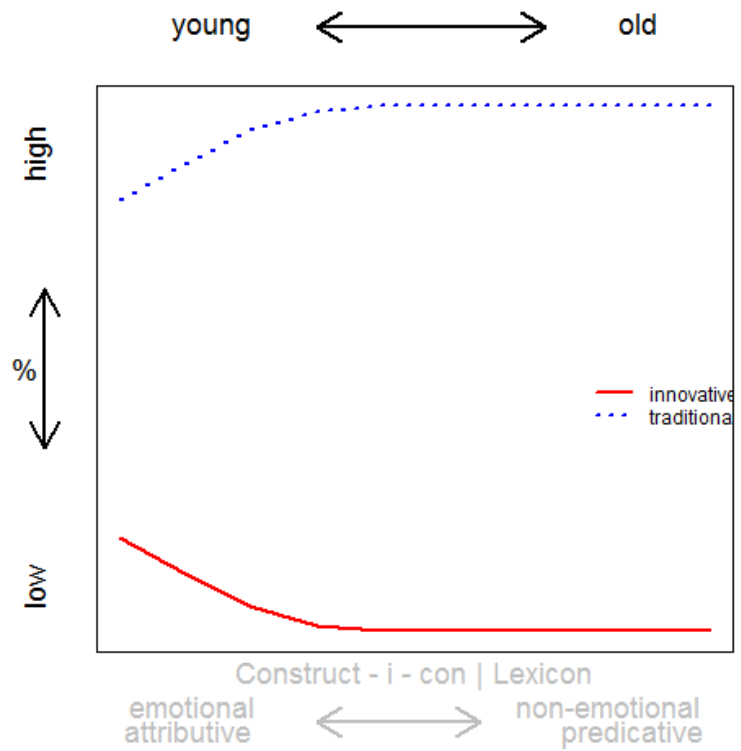

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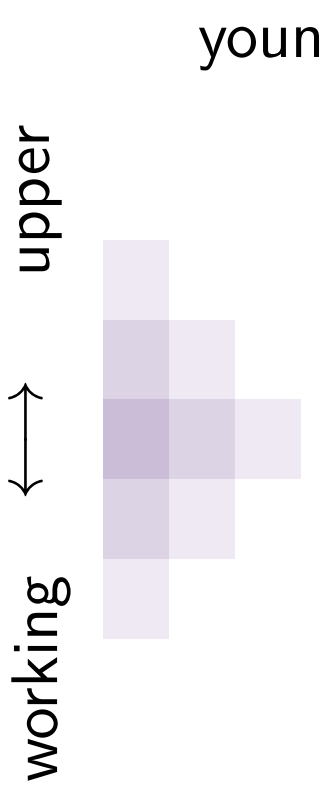

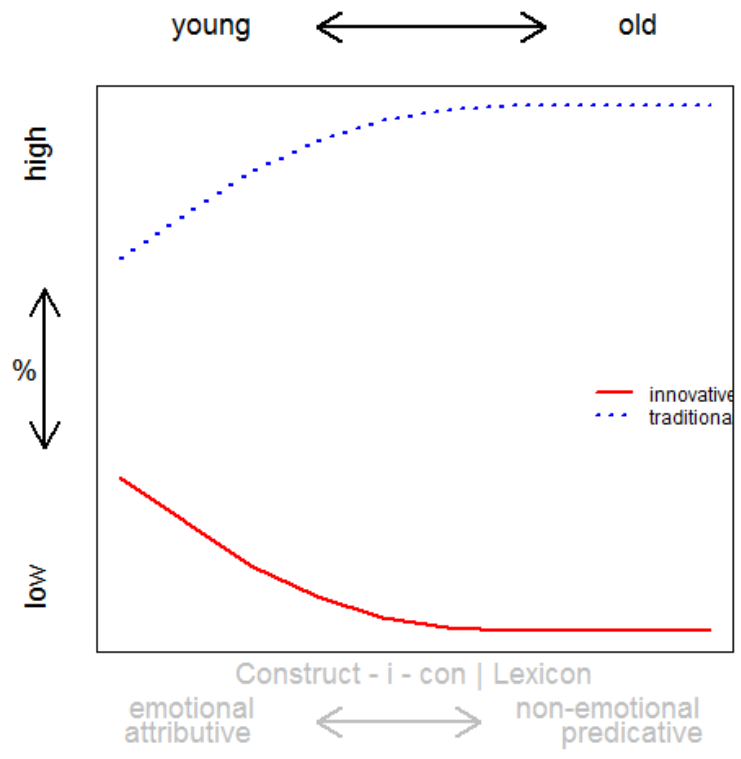

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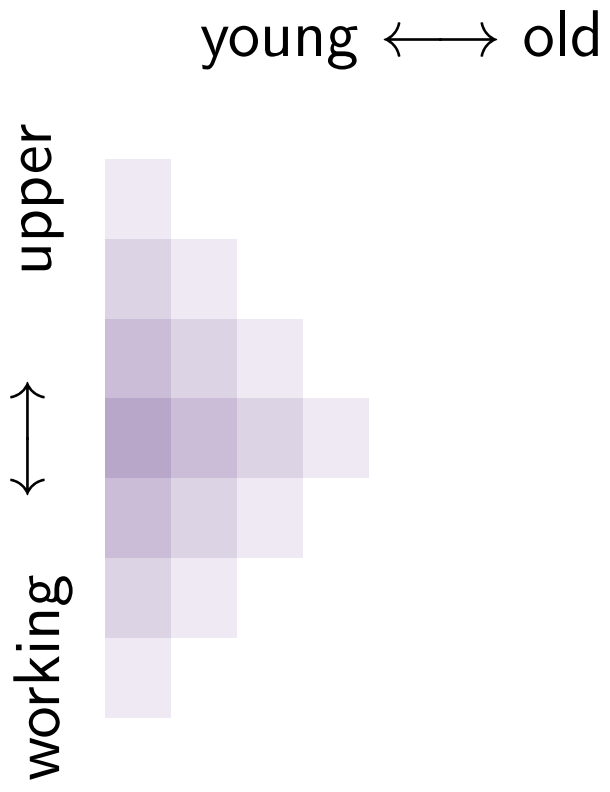

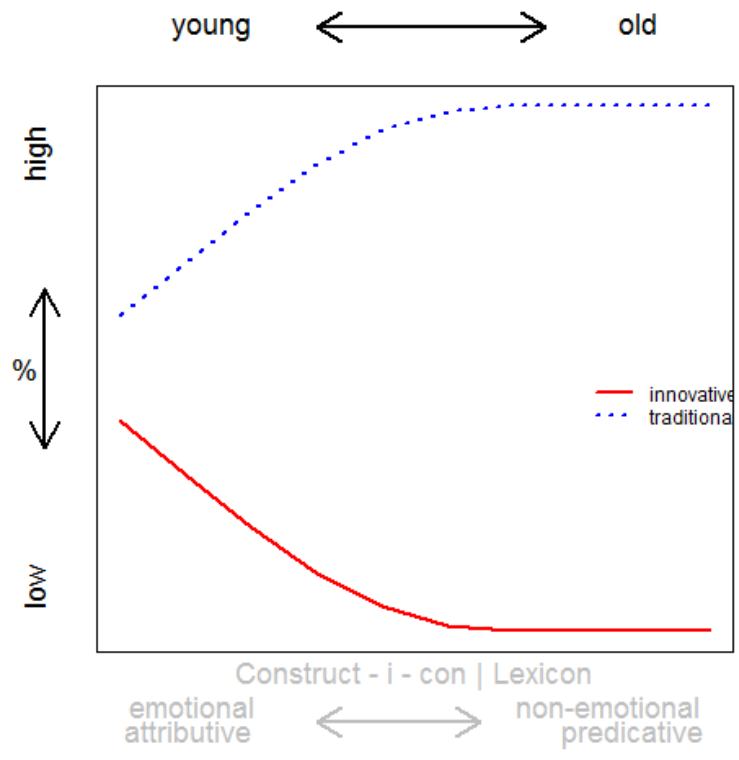

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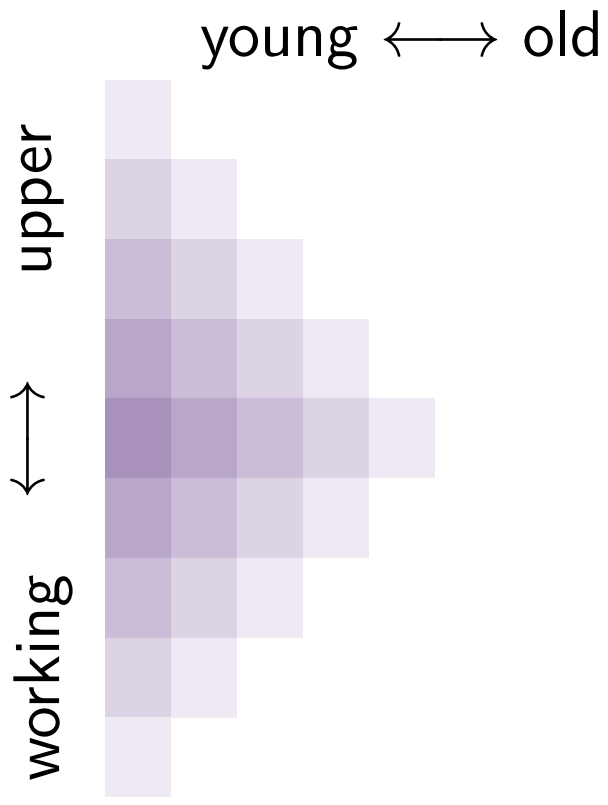

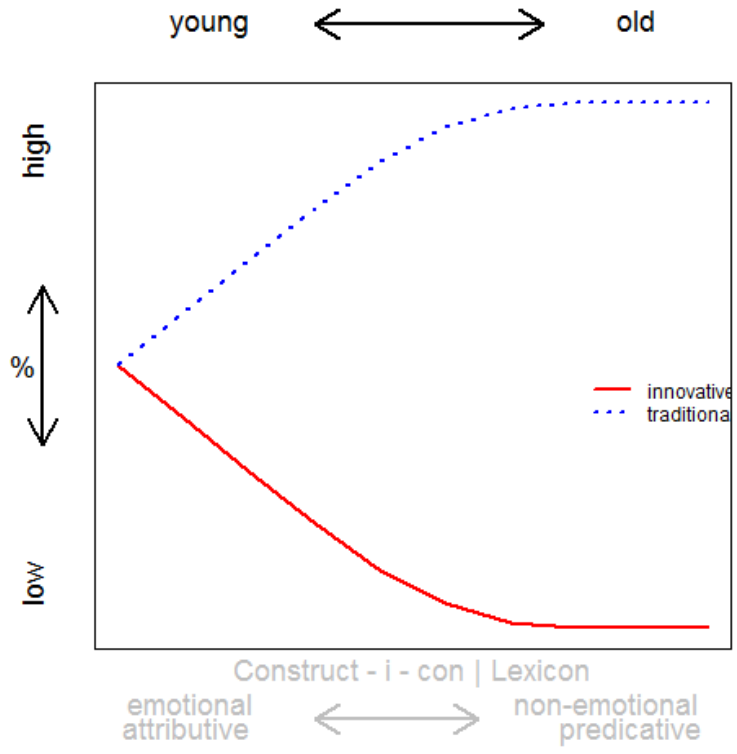

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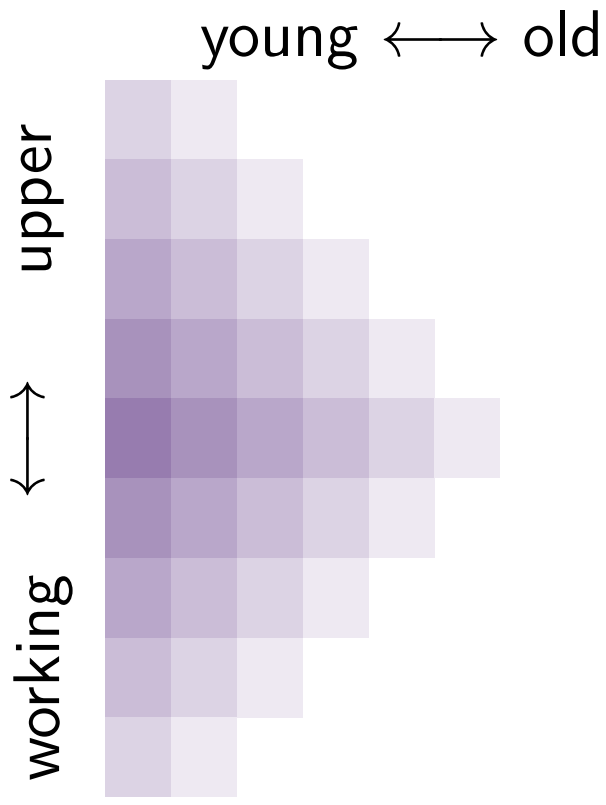

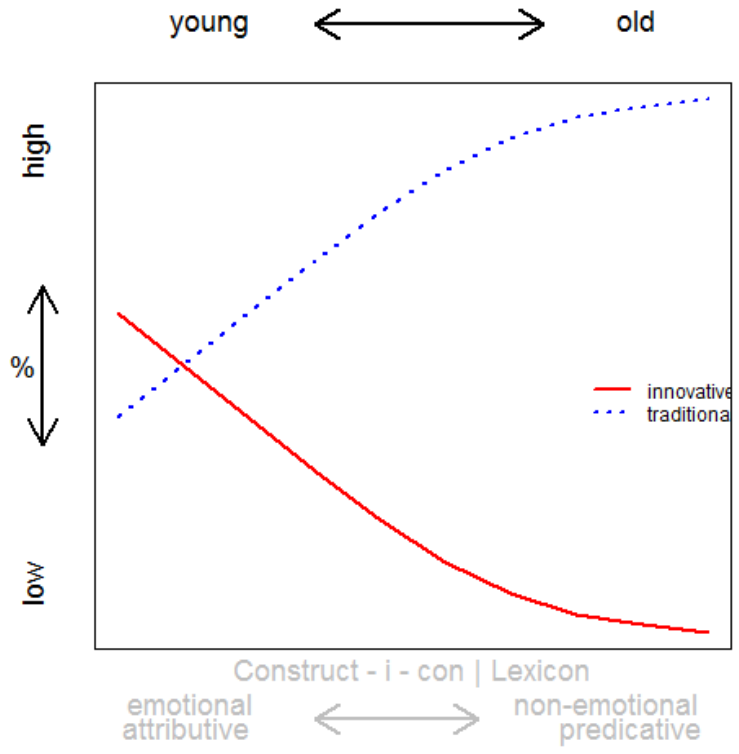

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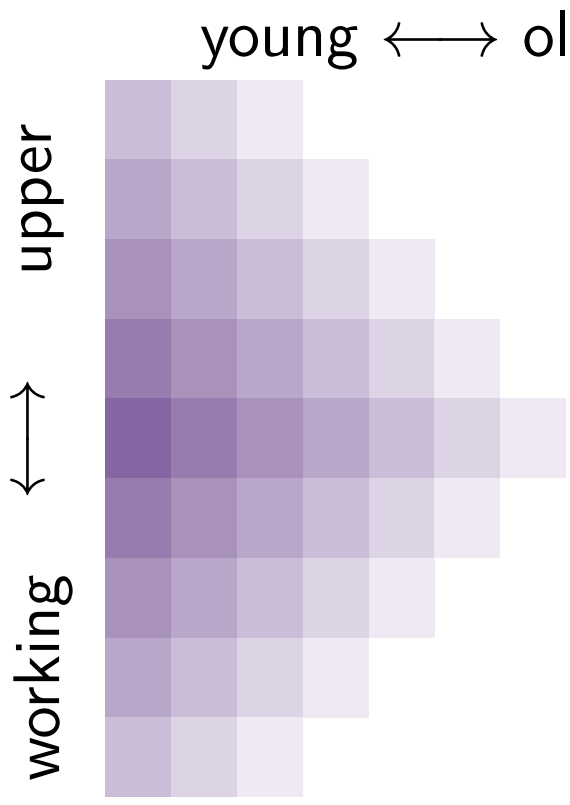

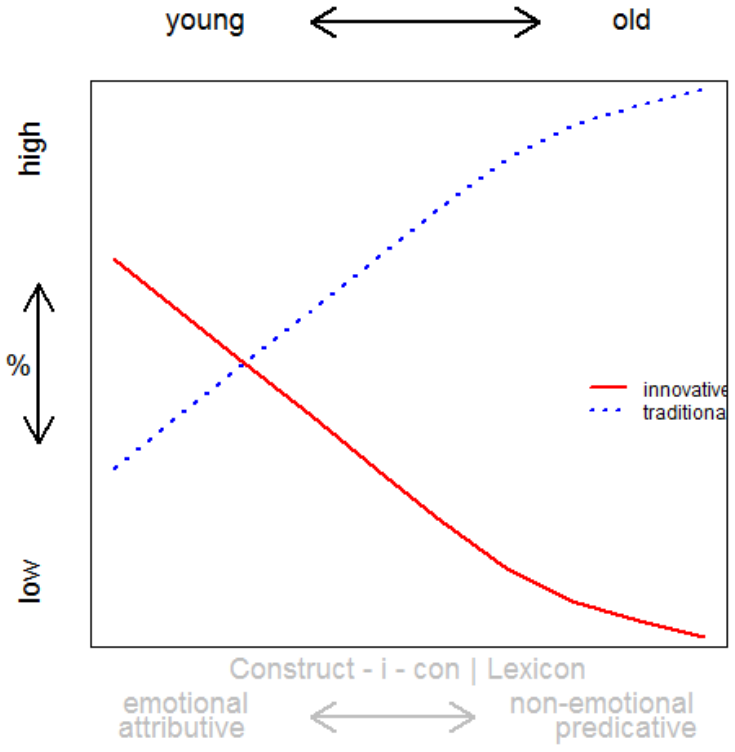

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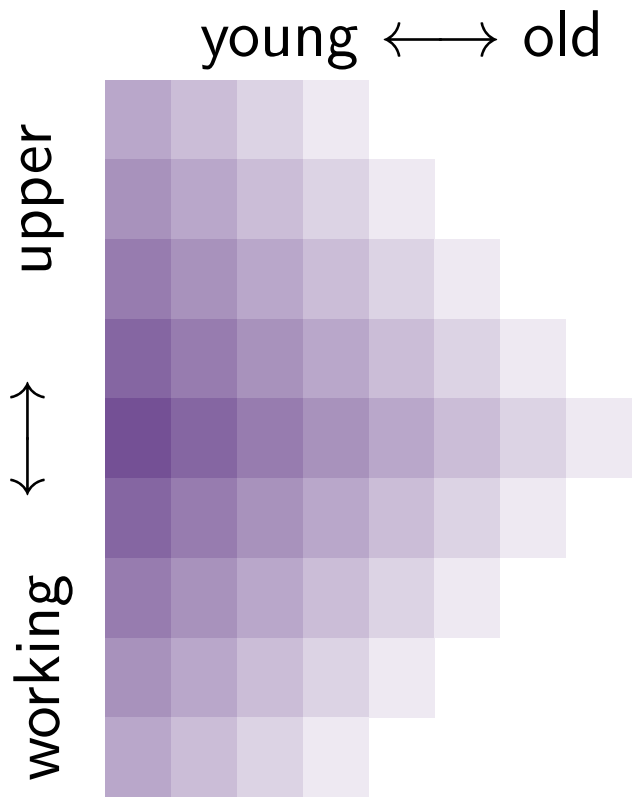

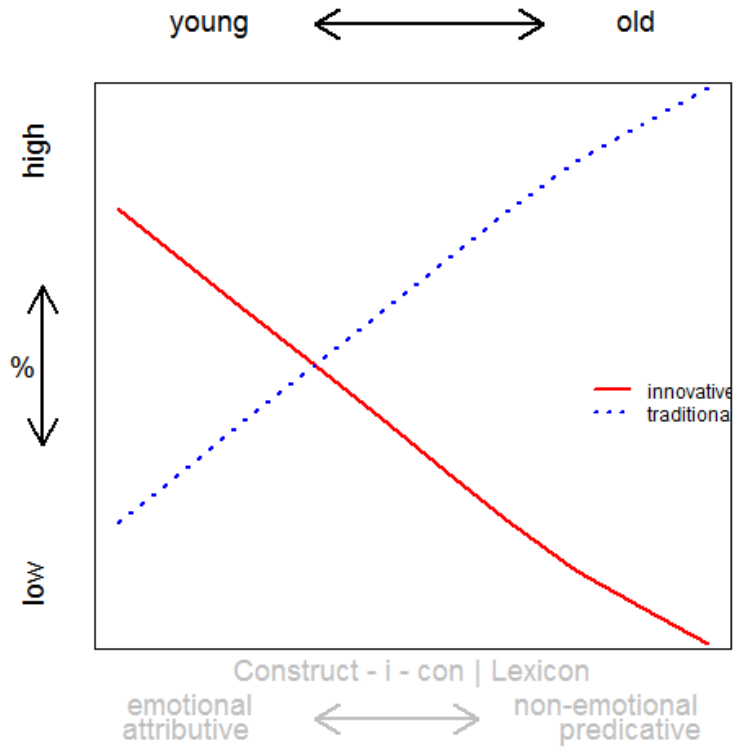

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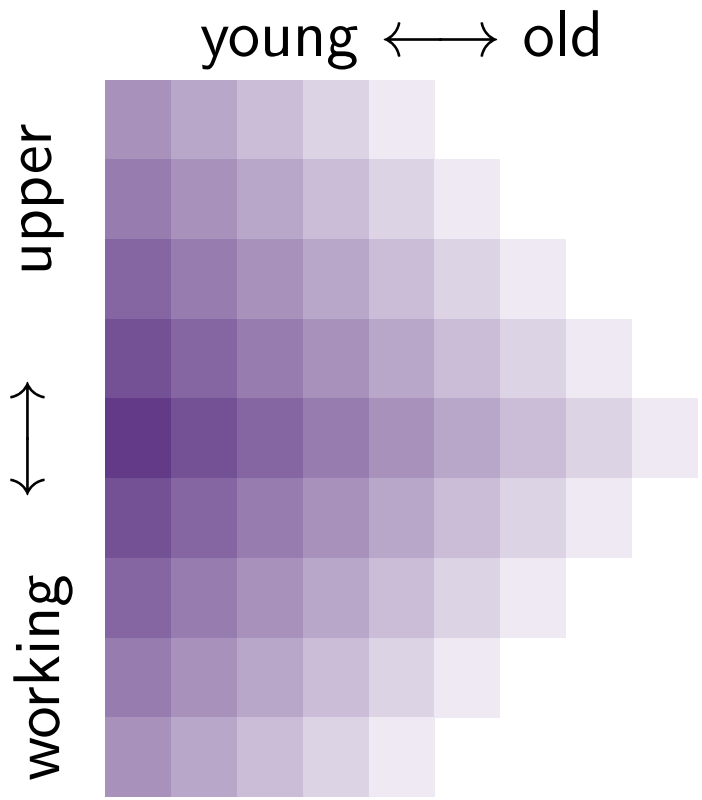

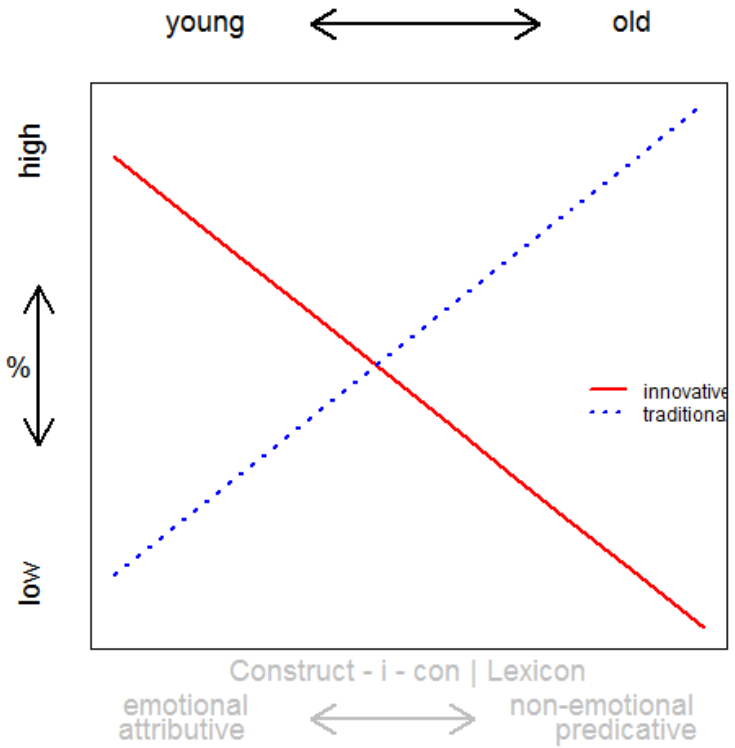

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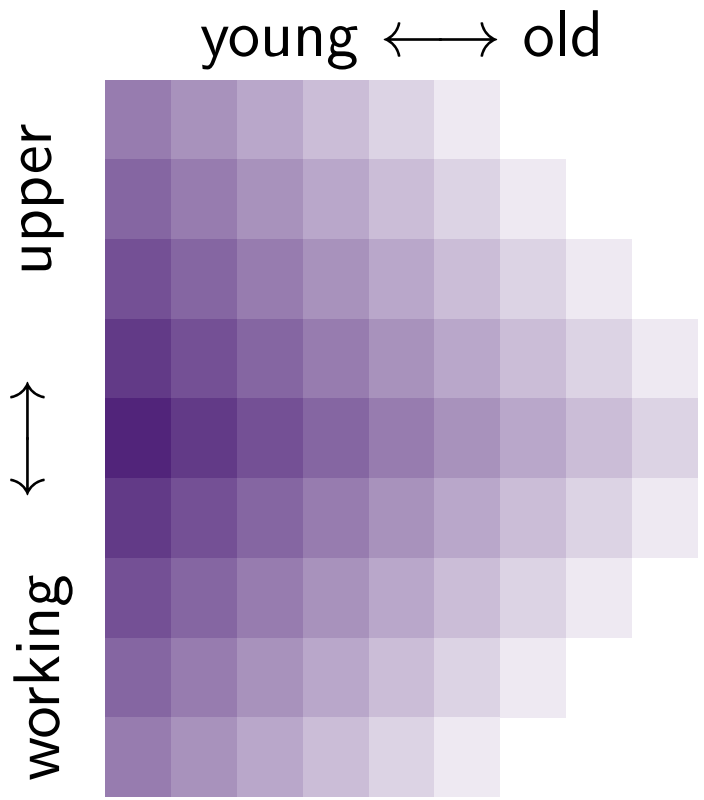

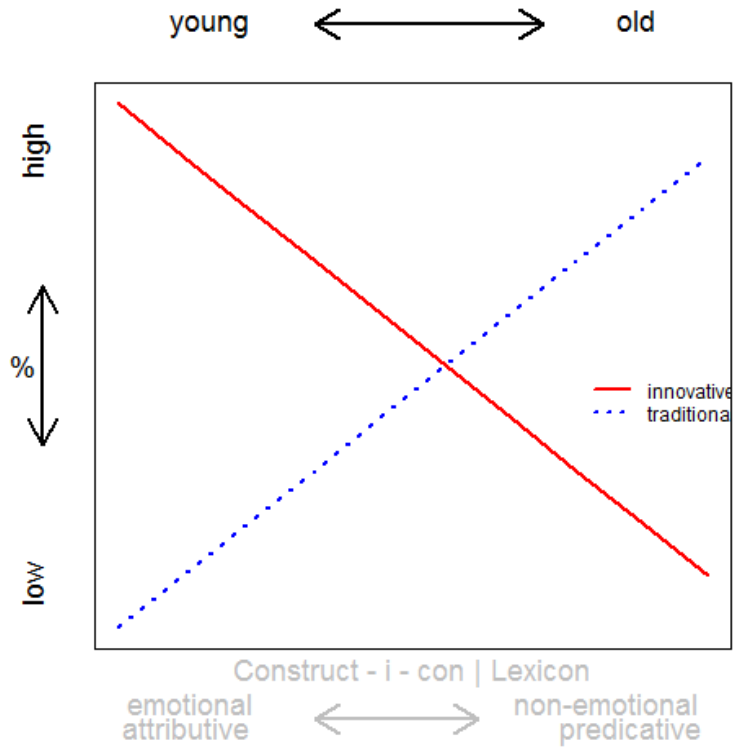

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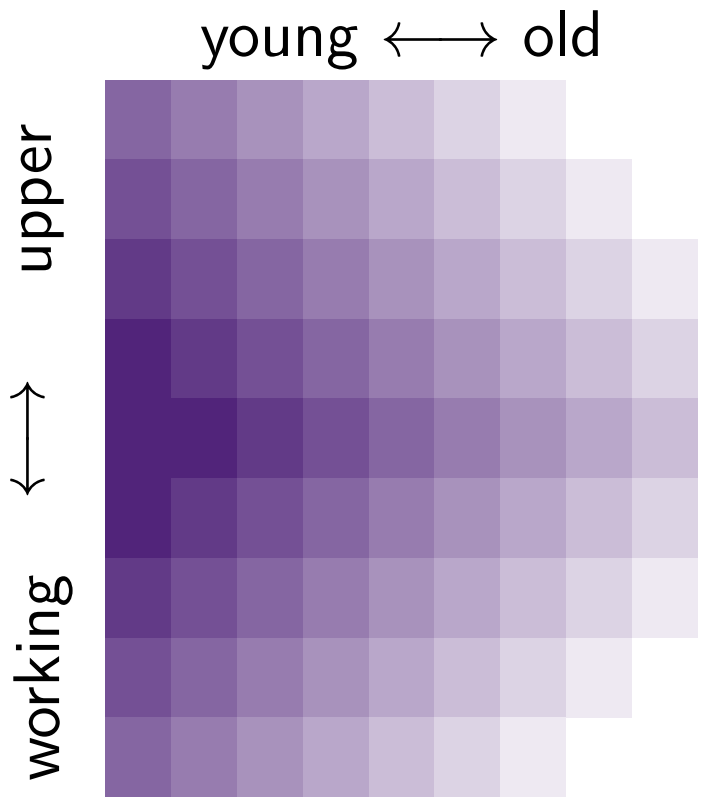

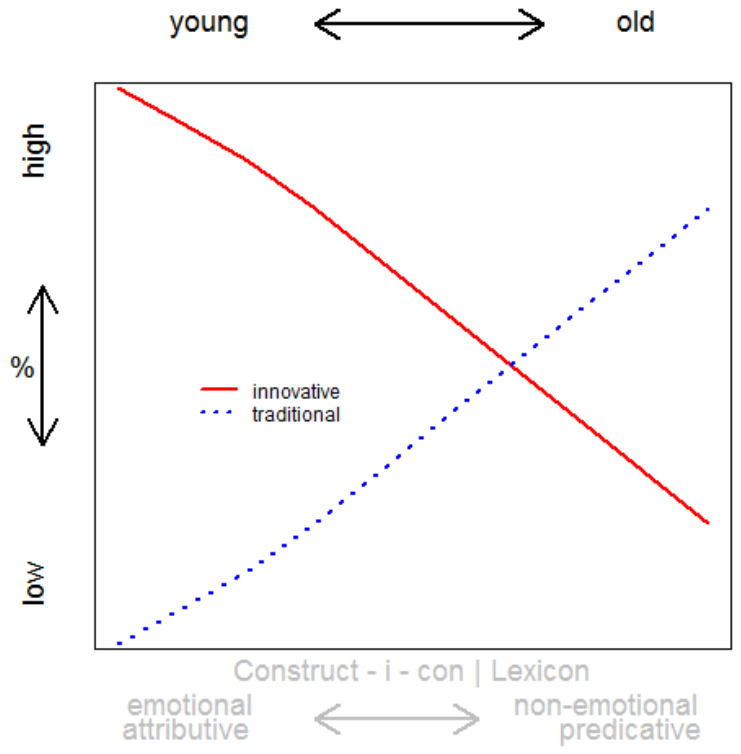

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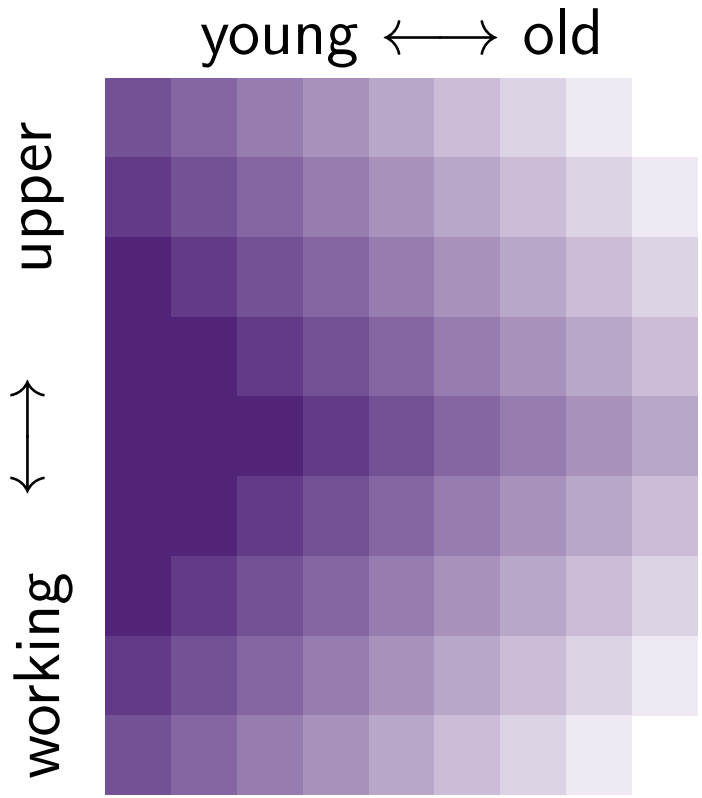

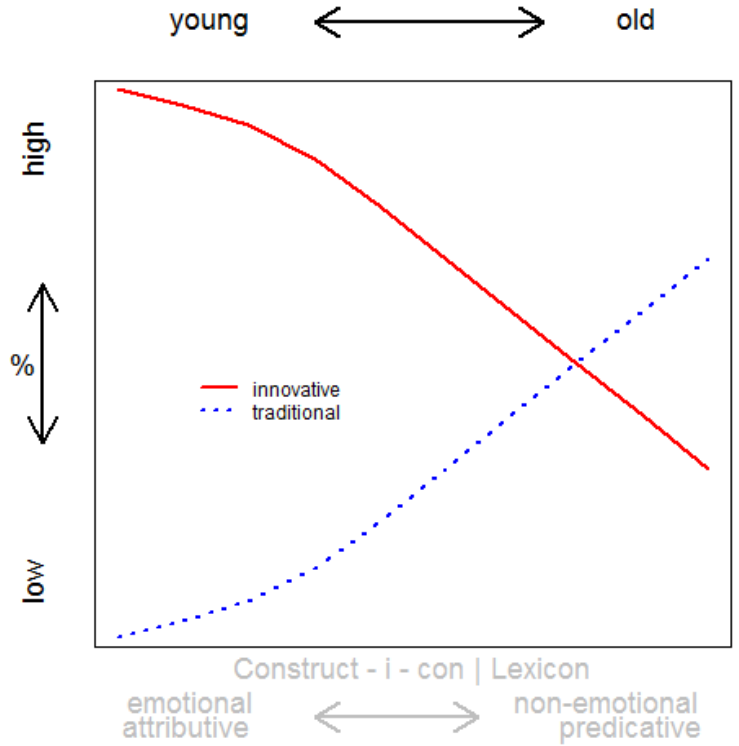

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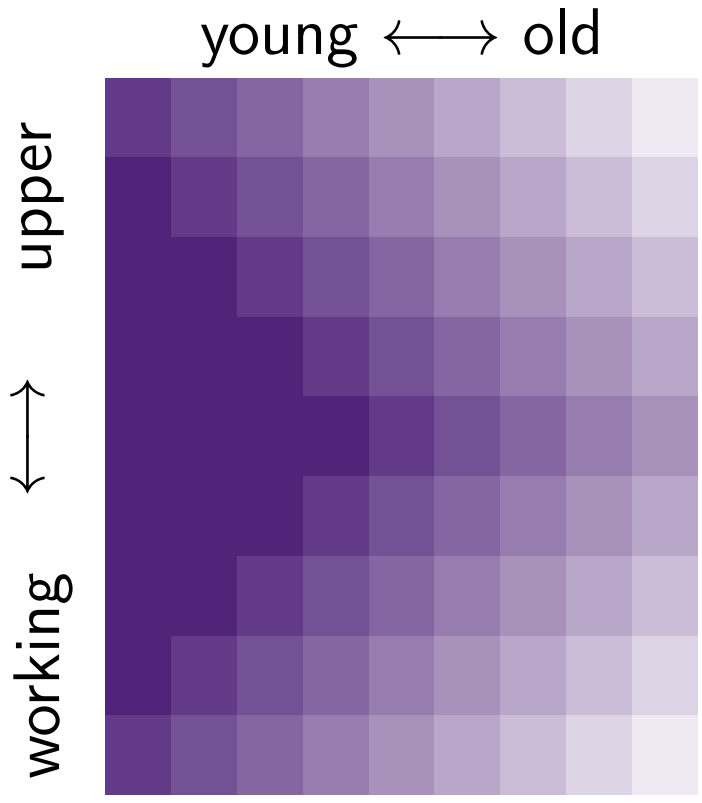

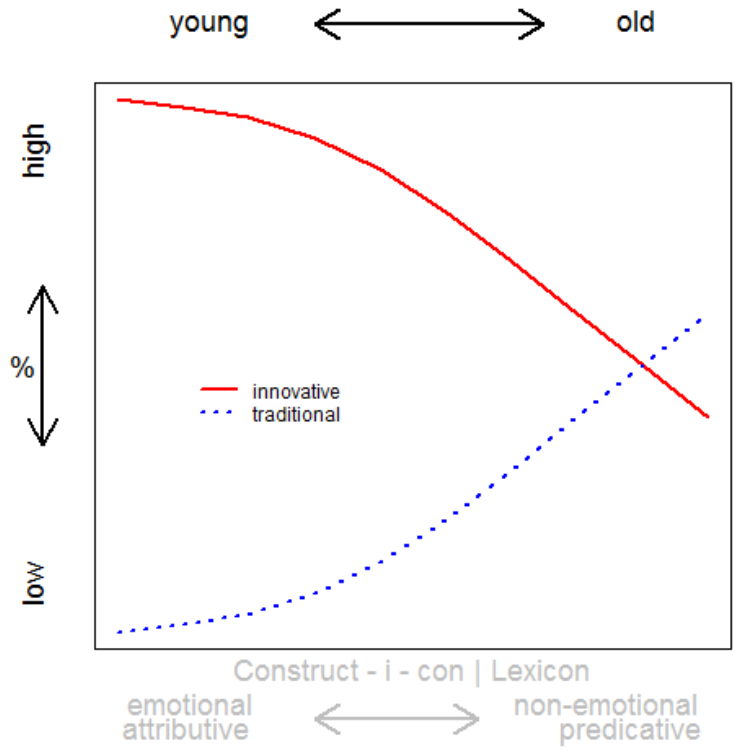

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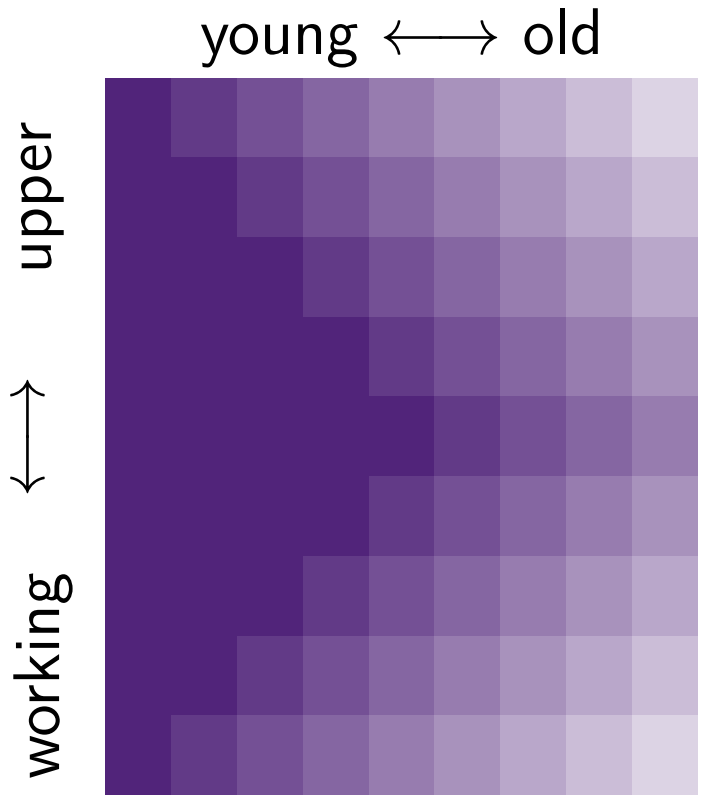

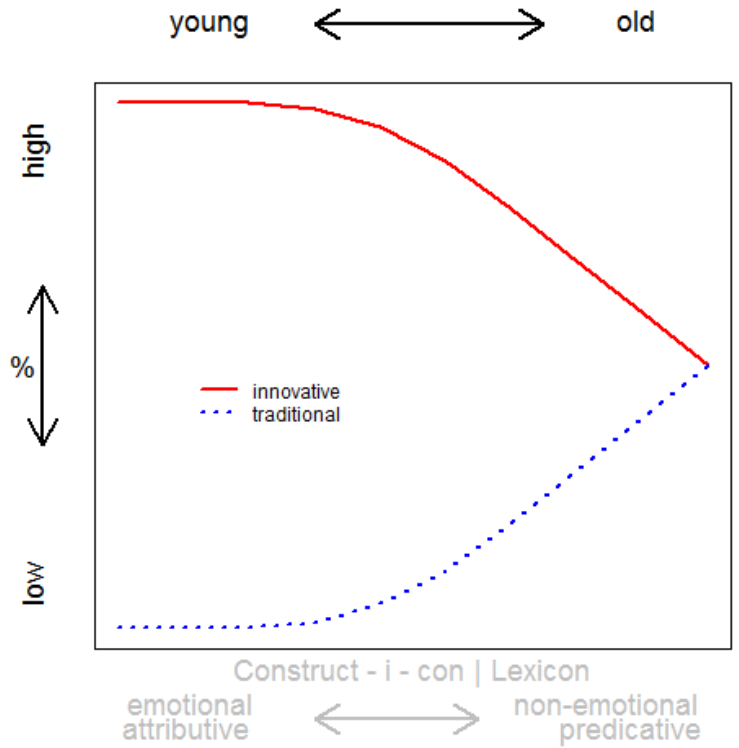

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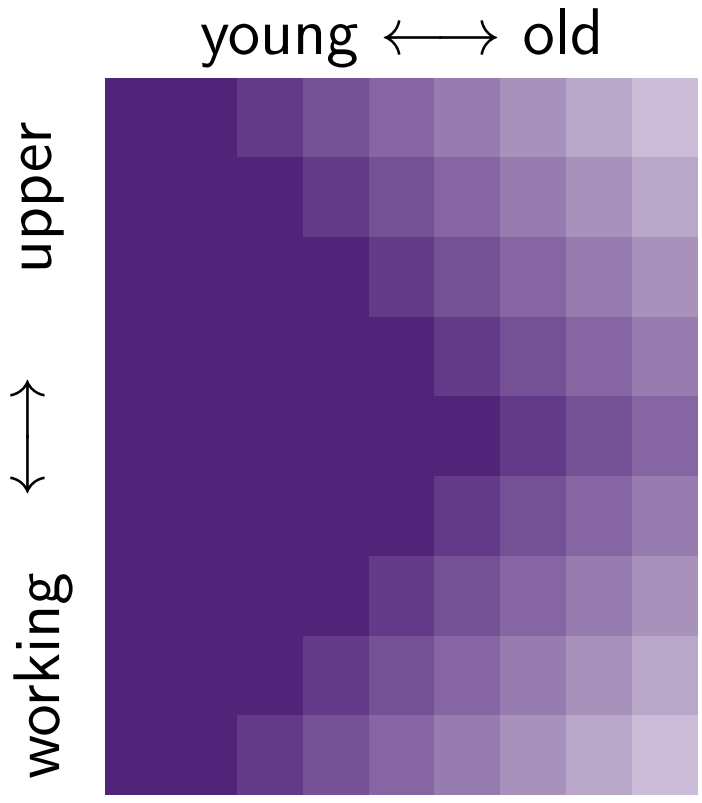

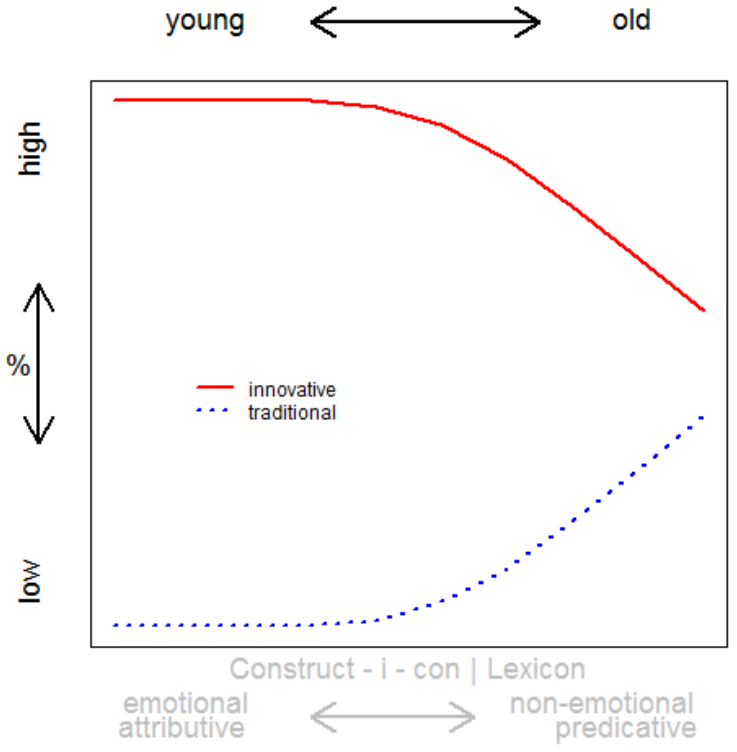

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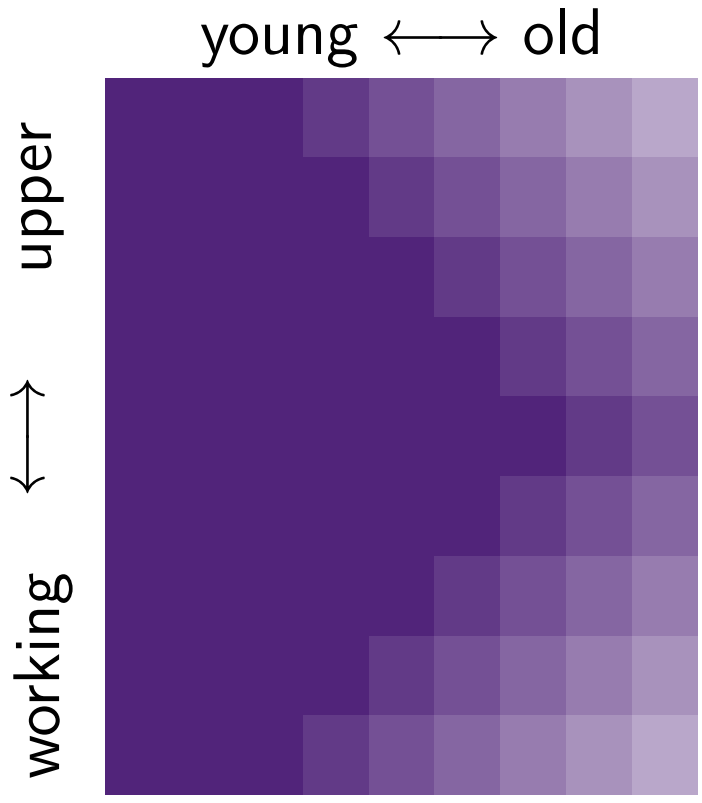

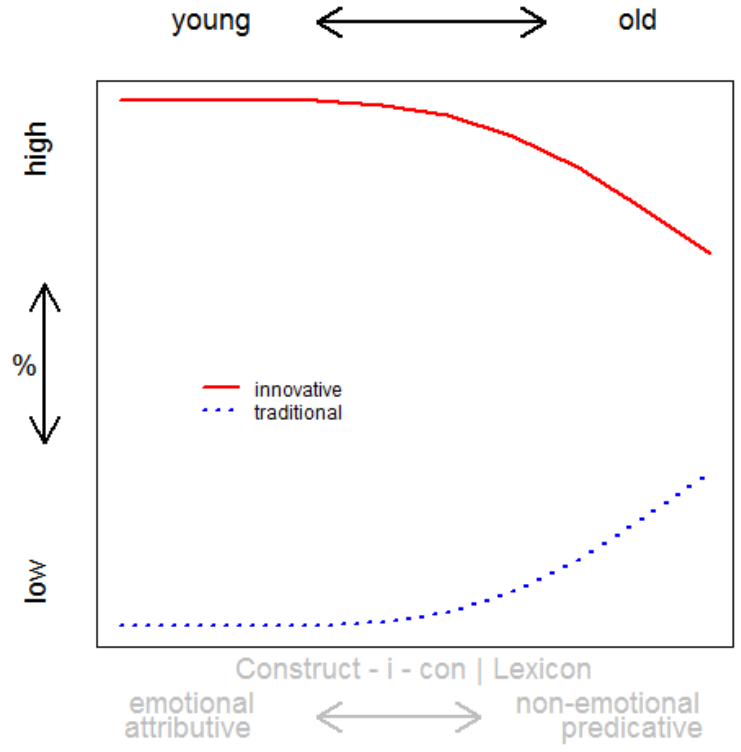

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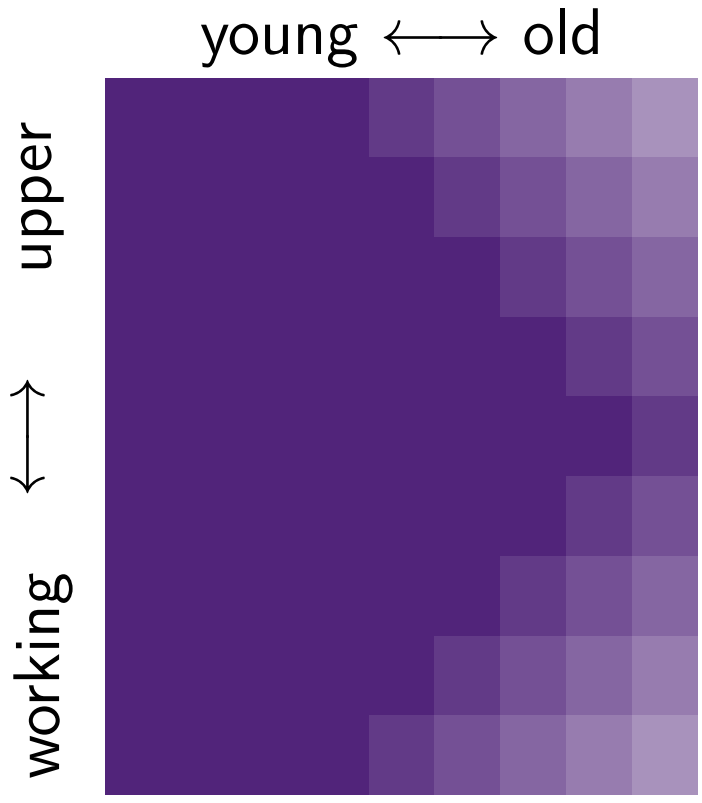

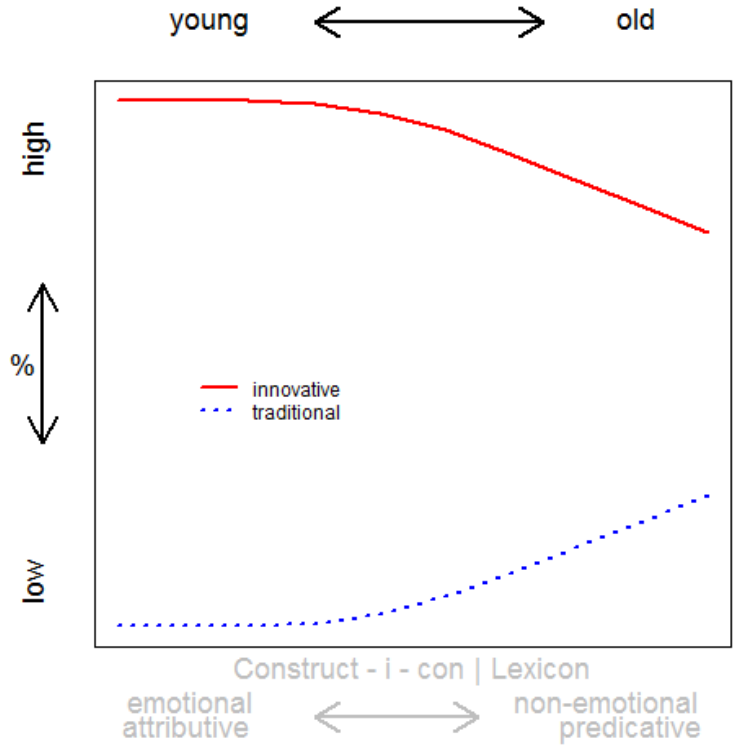

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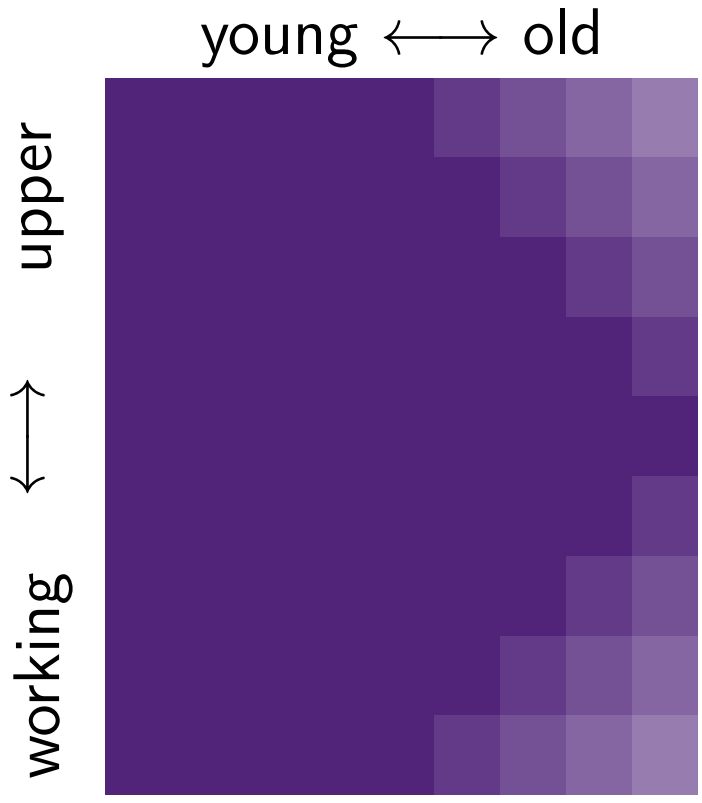

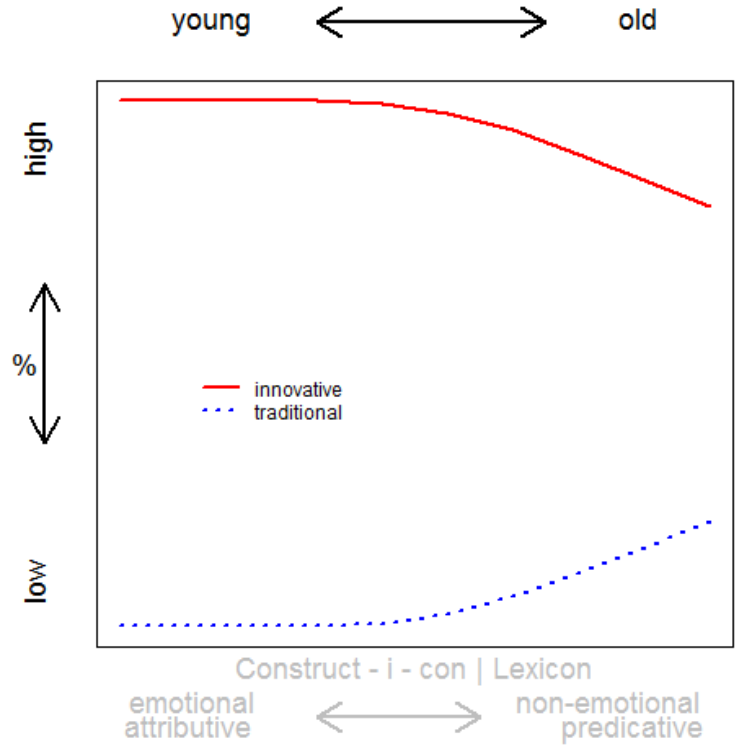

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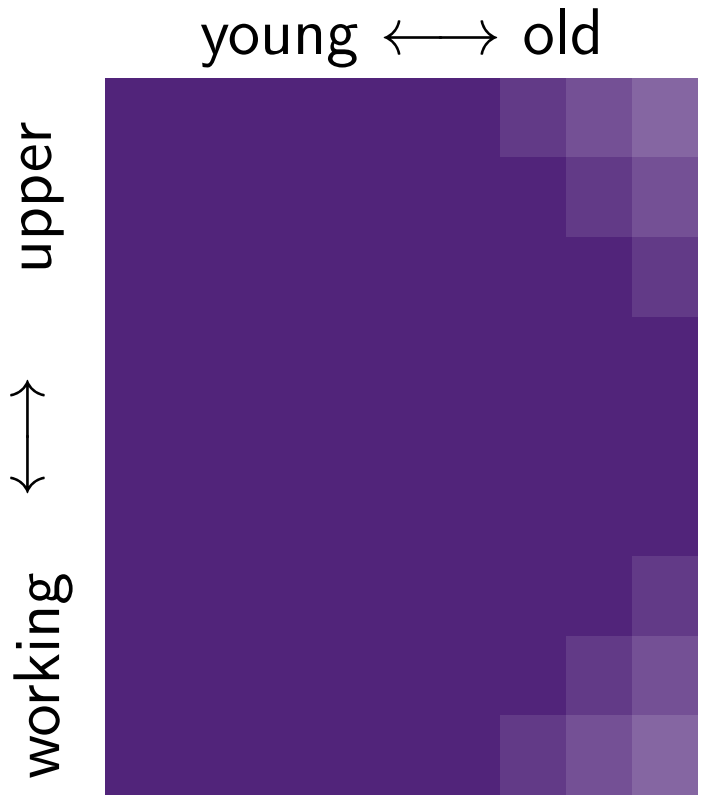

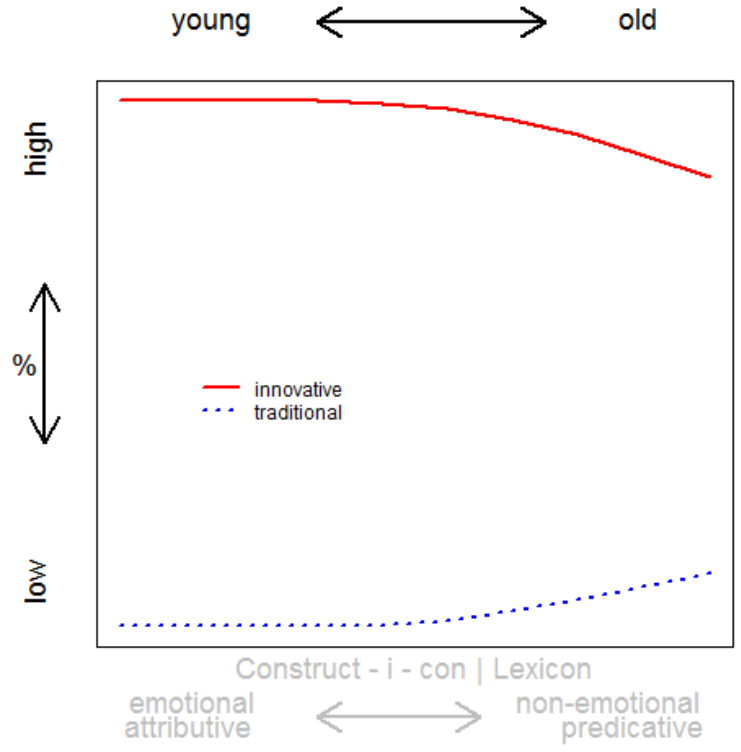

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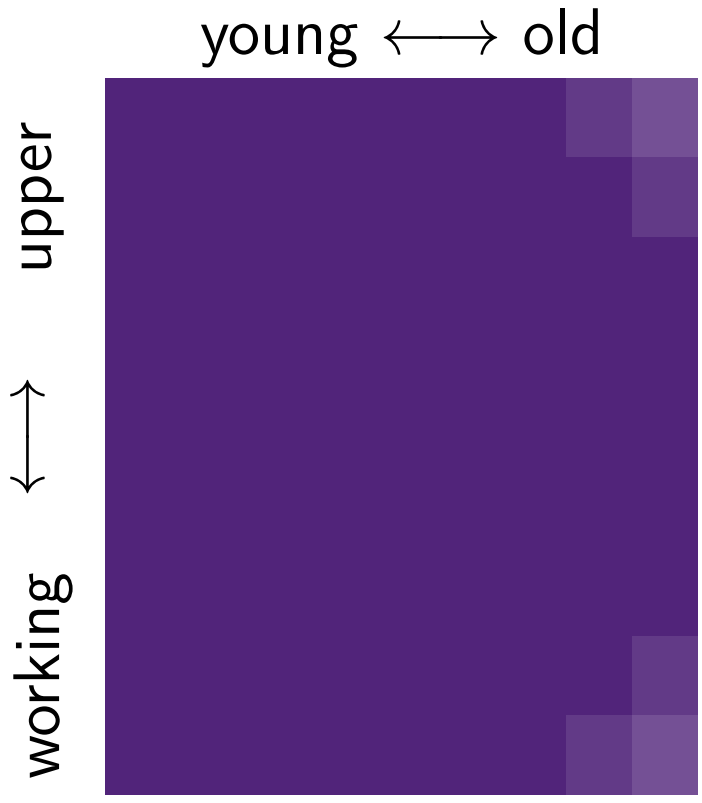

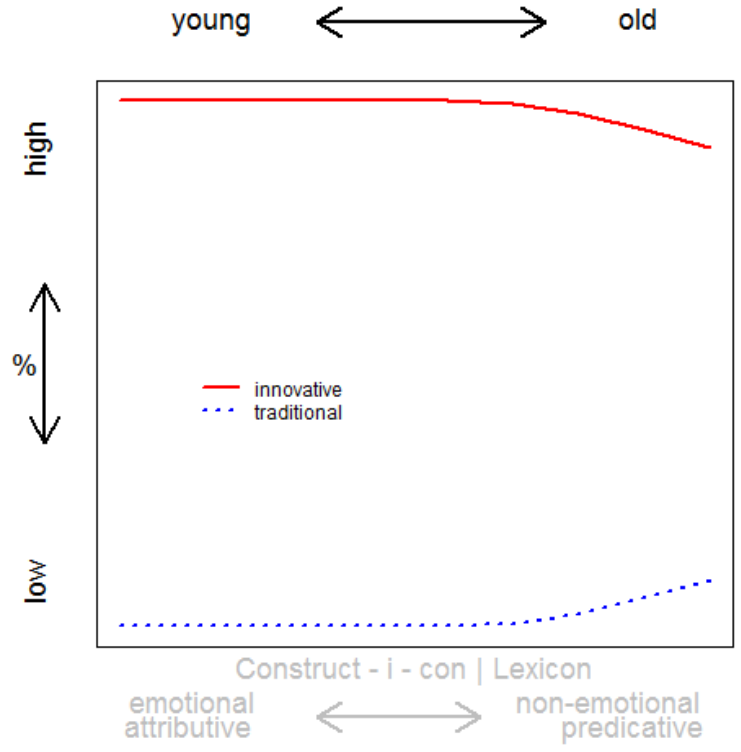

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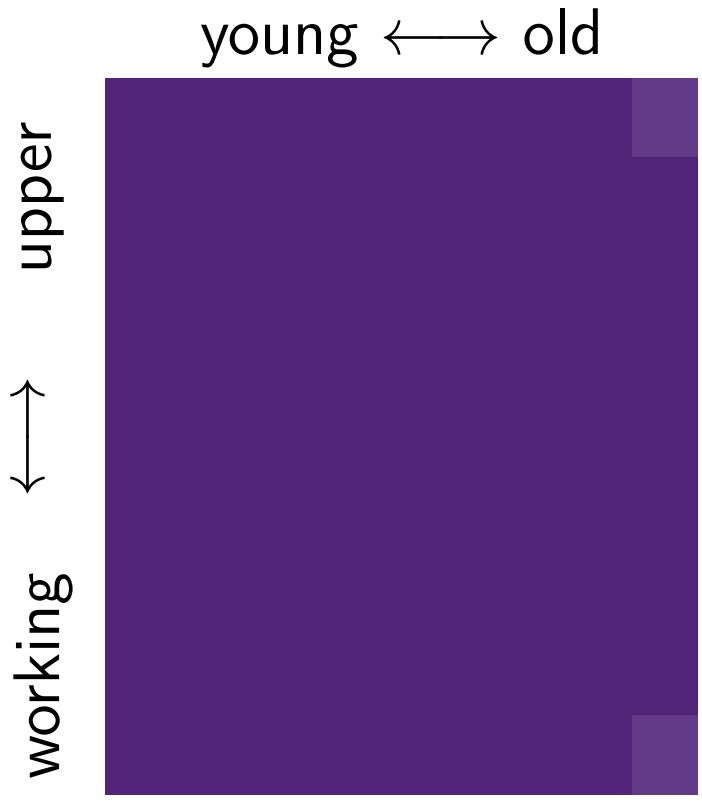

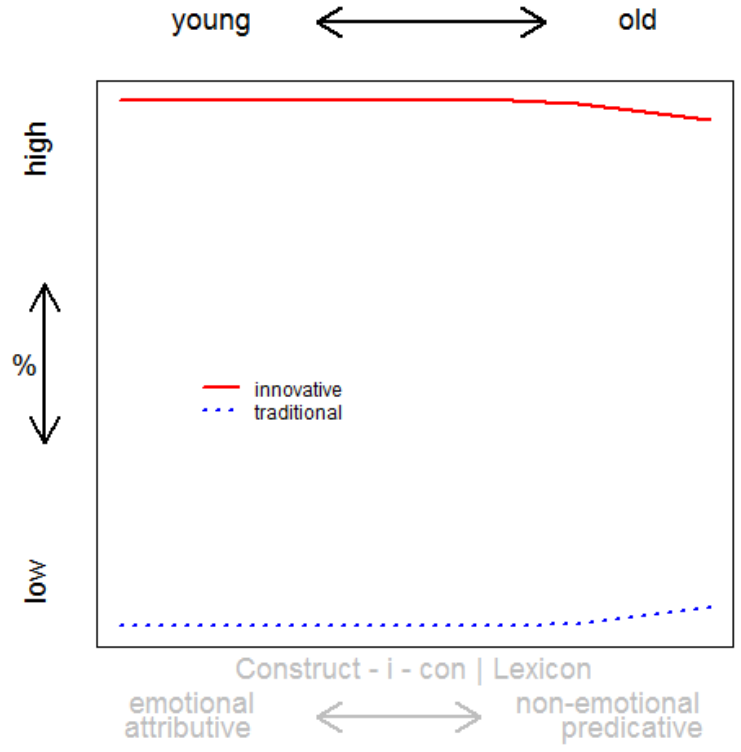
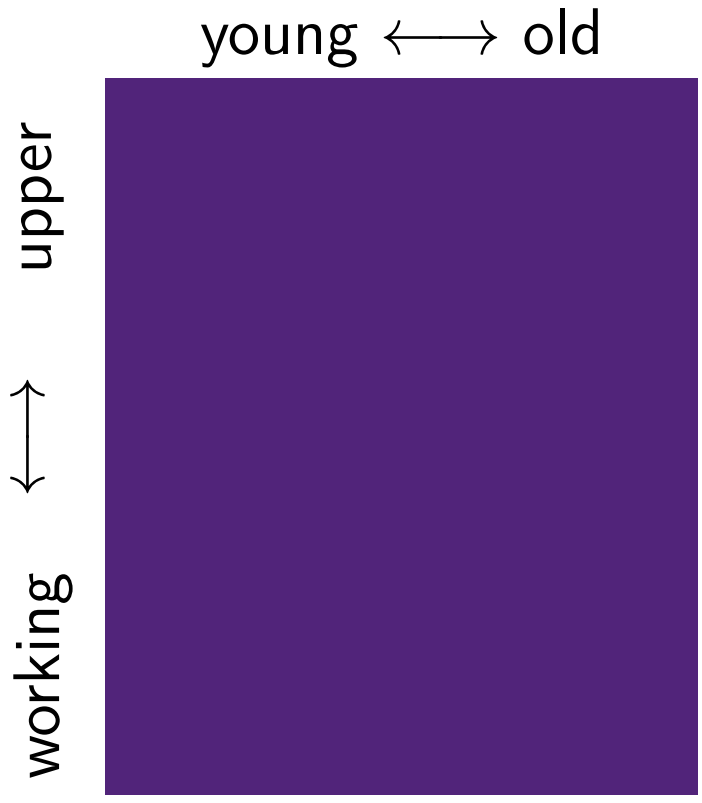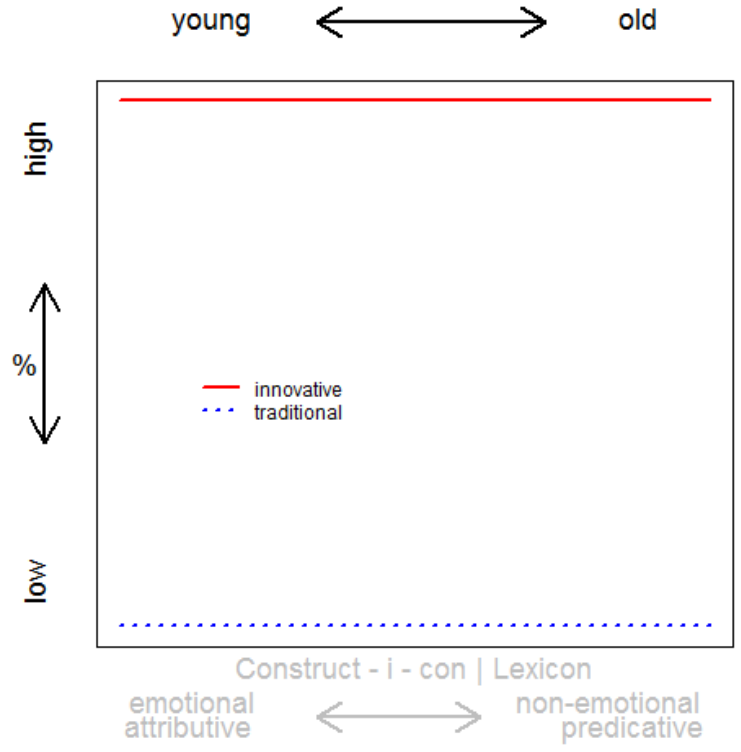
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