

Dimensions of Emotional Experience Vary Across Contexts in Daily Life

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Introduction

Multiple dimensions describe differences in an individual's emotional experiences:

- Emotional granularity¹:** the ability to identify and precisely label ones' emotions
- Emodiversity²:** the variety and relative abundance of emotions experienced over time
- Emotion covariation³:** the extent to which one simultaneously experiences positive and negative emotions over time

Past research has traditionally considered these dimensions as stable traits⁴. However, emerging evidence suggests that dimensions of emotion experience shift depending on the context^{4,5}.

Emotional experiences vary across social contexts and situations^{6,7} suggesting that these broader dimensions may also vary across these settings allowing individuals to meet situational goals across different contexts.

This study examines whether dimensions of emotional experience vary within individuals depending on who they are with (social context) and what they are doing (activity).

Methodology

Participants (N = 122):

- Age: $M=20.71$ ($SD = 3.24$)
- 77% Female
- 78% White, 11% multiracial, 7% East Asian, 4% South Asian, 3% Hispanic, 2% preferred not to say

Procedure:

6-week experience sampling protocol:

- **Frequency:** 6 quasi-random prompts per day, 5 days per week

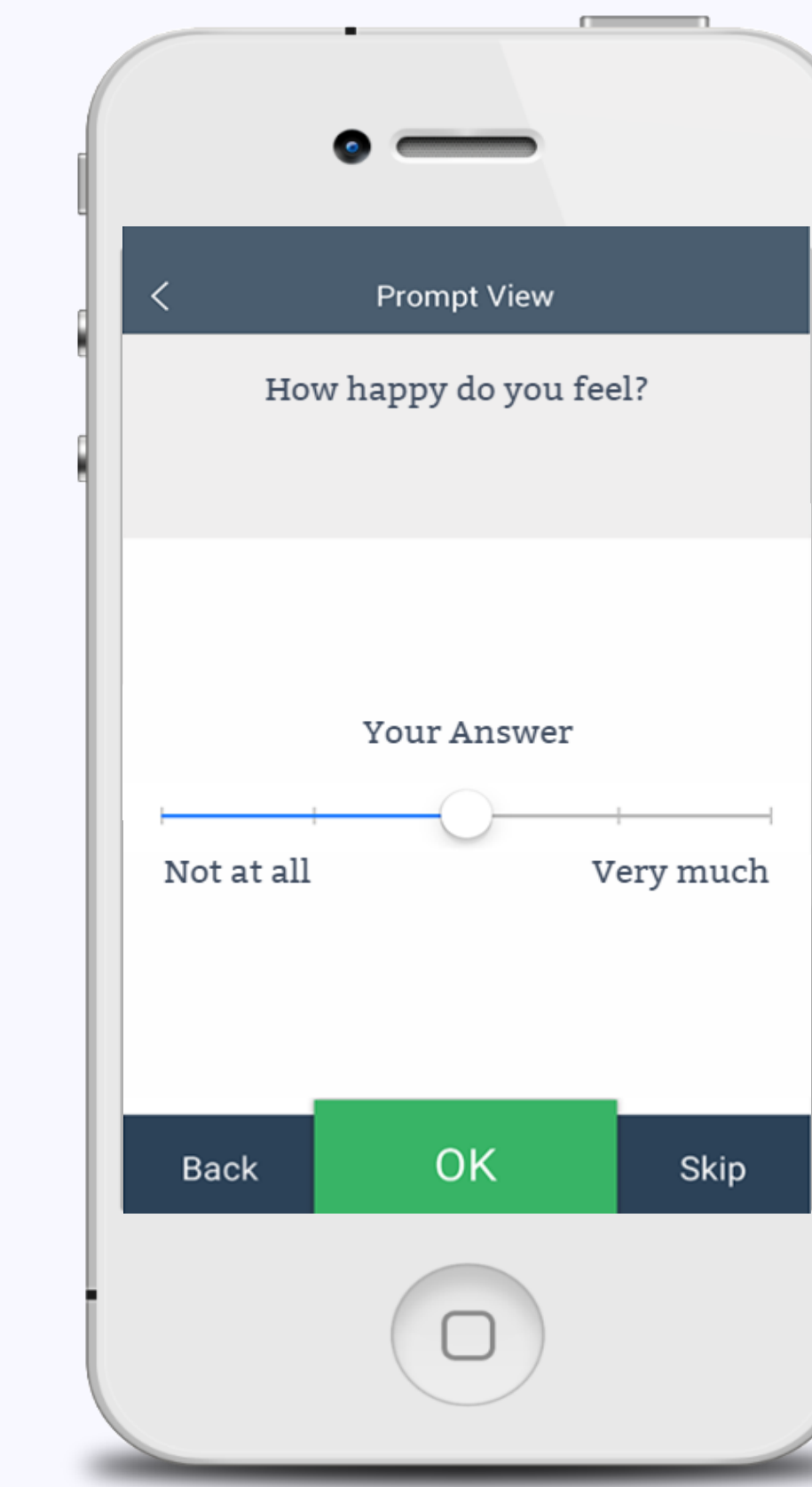
• **Emotion Ratings:** Participants rated 16 emotions (happy, excited, relaxed, focused, content, tired, neutral, sad, nervous, frustrated, stressed, annoyed, proud, grateful, angry, afraid) on a scale of 0 ("Not at all") to 4 ("Very much").

Activity Contexts:

- "What are you currently doing?":
 - **Work:** Work (at job), school-work
 - **Tasks/Responsibilities:** Preparing/eating food, exercising, commuting, household responsibilities
 - **Leisure:** Relaxing/low-energy leisure (e.g., movie, social media), stimulating/high-energy leisure (e.g., party, bowling)

Social Contexts:

- "Who are you with?":
 - **Alone**
 - **Alone but others are around**
 - **Interacting with others:**
 - Interacting with one person
 - Interacting with several people



Discussion

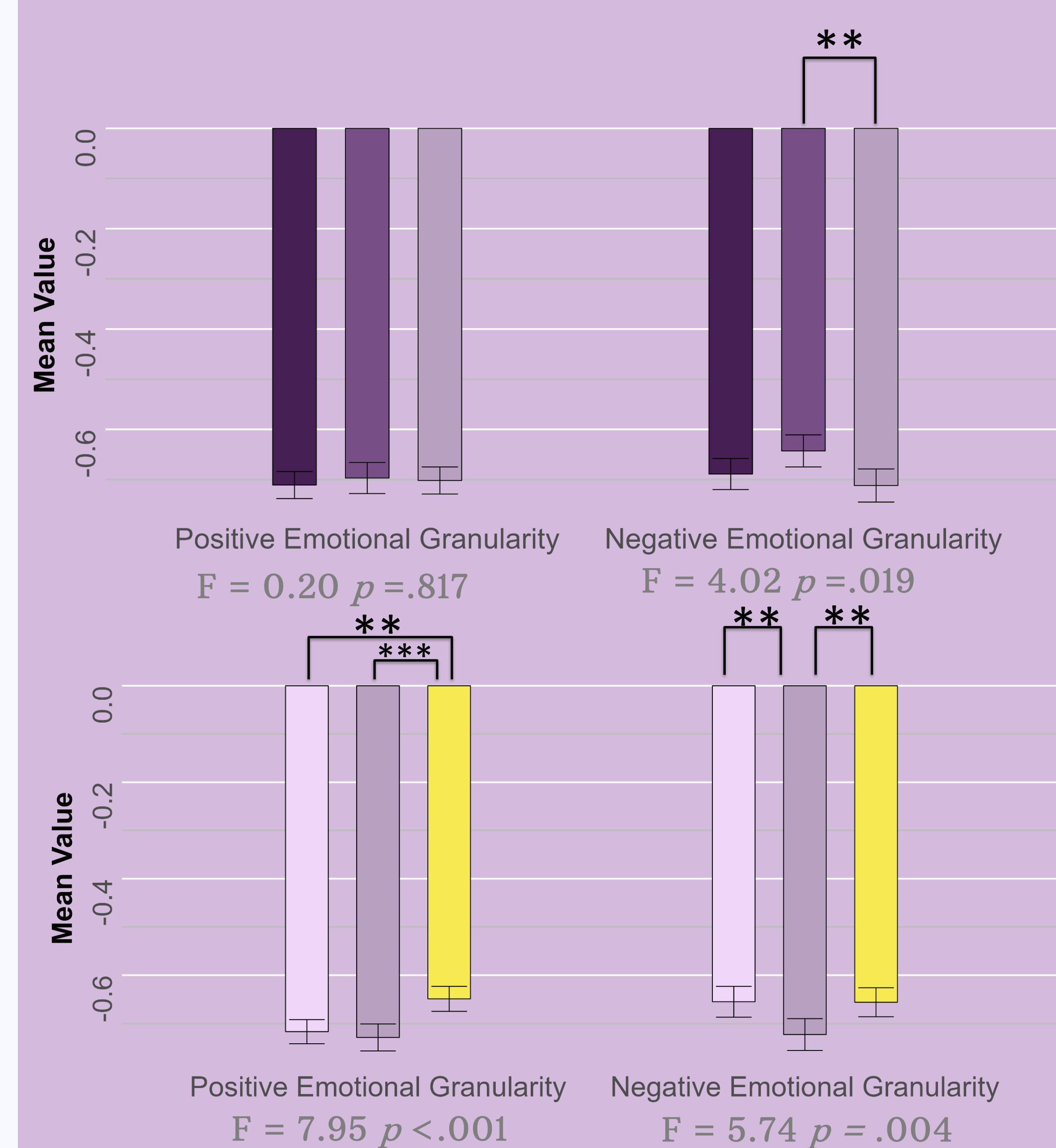
These findings suggest that the precision, diversity, and complexity of our emotion experiences **shift depending on the situational context** including who we are with and what we are doing.

We found that individuals had more diverse emotions when alone, more emotion covariation when interacting with others and more granular negative emotions when alone in the presence of others. Additionally, work tasks were associated with more granular emotions, while tasks/responsibilities were associated with greater diversity of emotions.

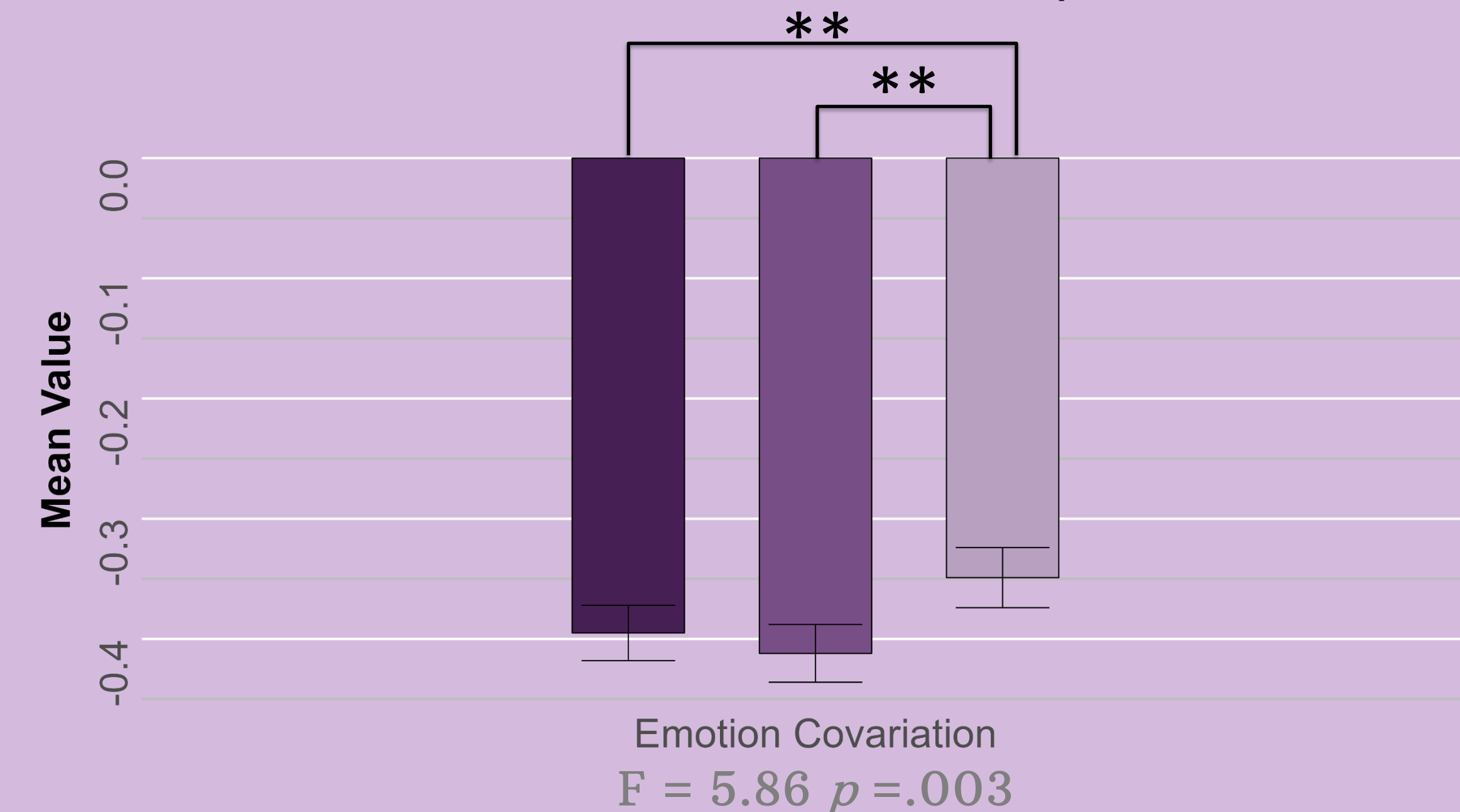
This highlights that **these qualities of our emotion experiences are fine-tuned to meet situational demands**, rather than being fixed traits.

Future research should explore why certain contexts promote differences in dimensions of emotional experiences and whether these shifts are beneficial for well-being.

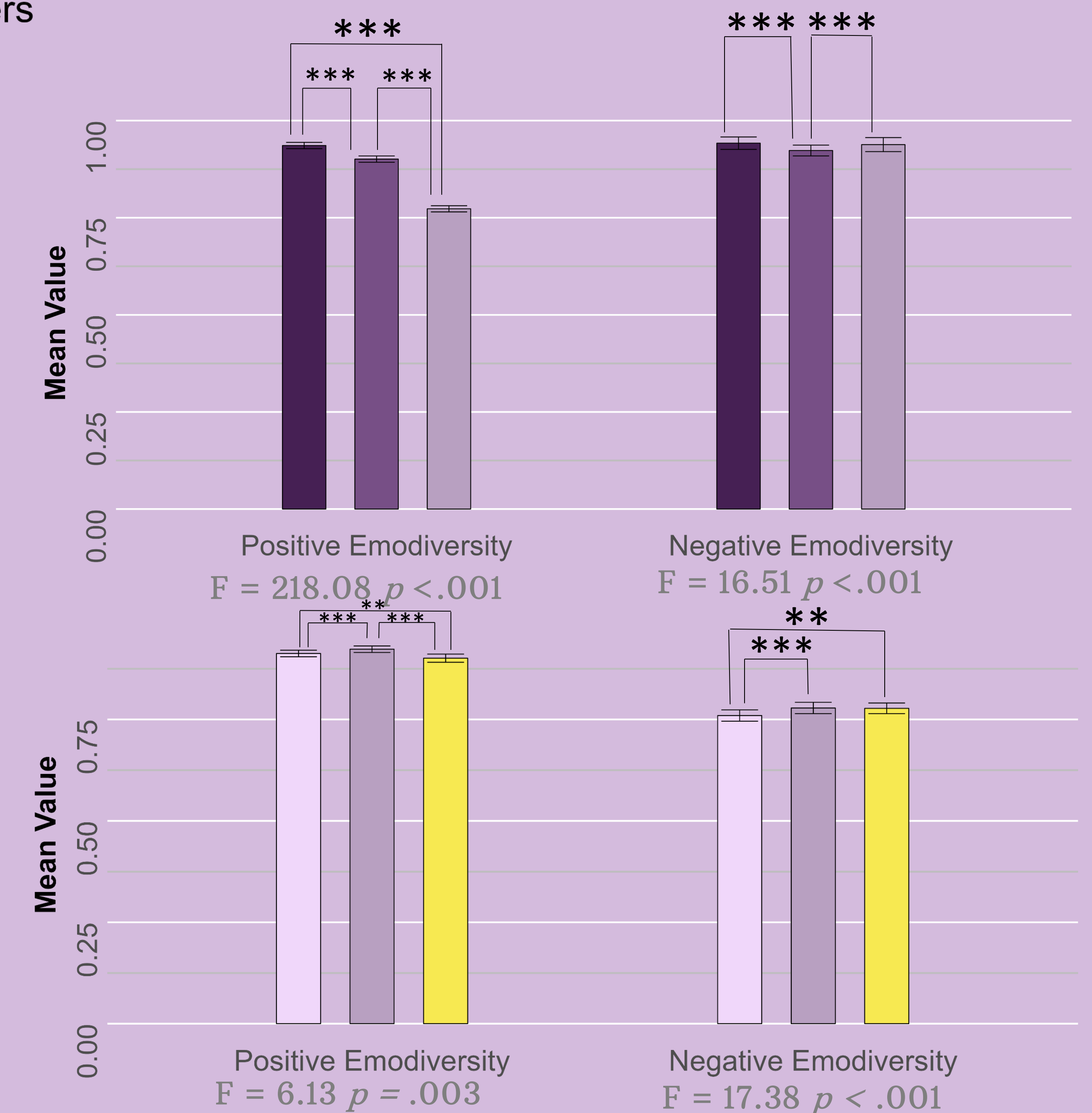
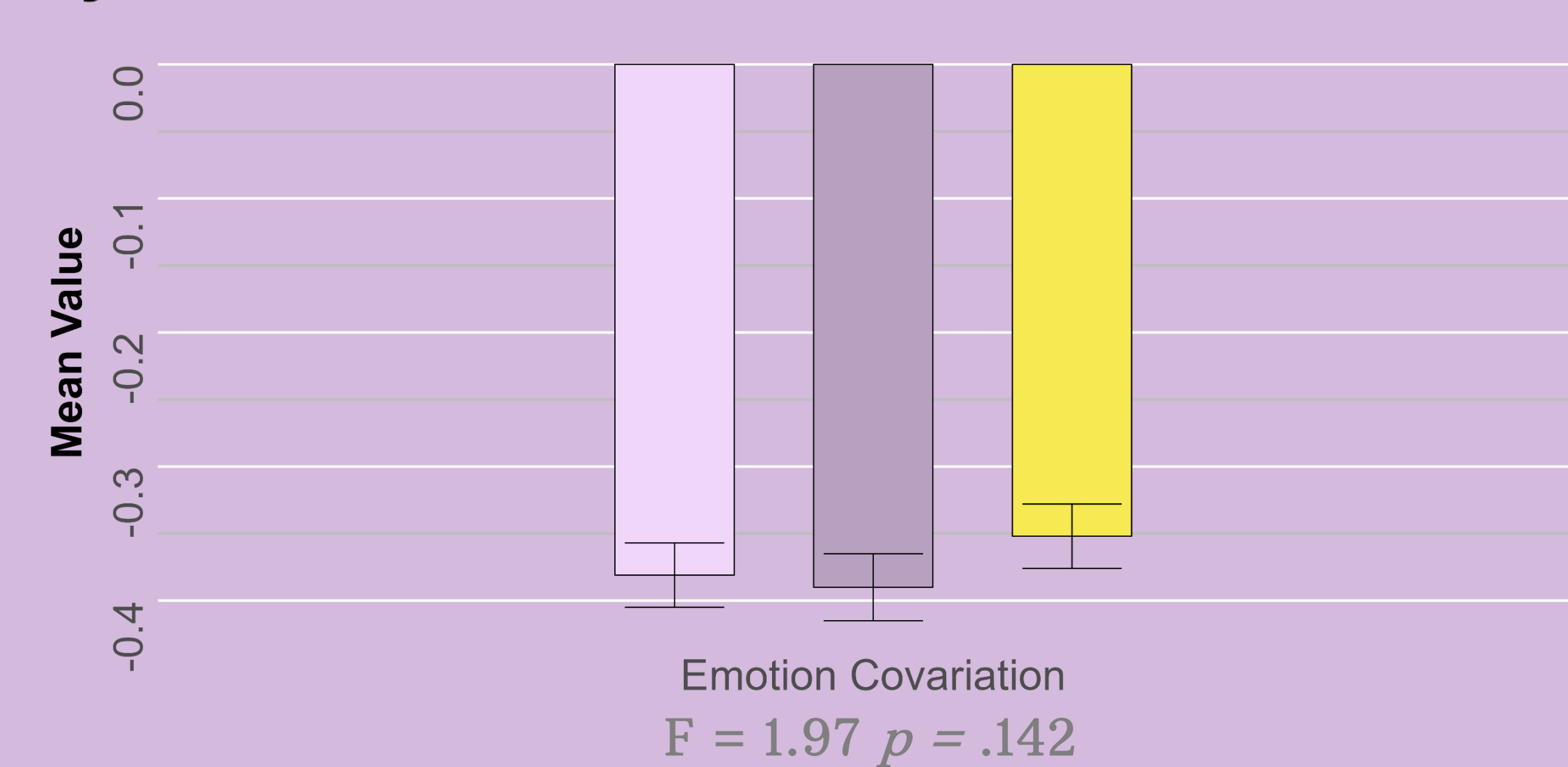
Results



Social Context



Activity Contexts



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