

Examining Situational Differences in Momentary Emotion Differentiation and Emotional Clarity in Everyday Life

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People experience momentary fluctuations in how much they differentiate between emotions and how clear they are about what they are feeling. To better understand situational predictors of shifts in emotion differentiation and emotional clarity, we investigated whether individuals are more differentiated and clearer about their emotions in social situations (vs. alone) given that emotions fulfill important social functions. We tested if these within-person associations varied depending on socially relevant individual differences, including age, extraversion, and social connectedness. We also examined whether people are more differentiated and clearer in situations that have previously been processed (i.e., familiar situations) and if this effect was stronger for older (vs. younger) adults. Community adults ($N = 290$, aged 25–85 years) completed measures of extraversion and social connectedness and then were randomly prompted 6 times a day for 10 days to report on their current emotional experience and situation. Using multilevel structural equation modeling, social context was associated with less positive emotion differentiation and not associated with emotional clarity; these within-person associations did not differ by age, extraversion, or social connectedness. Individuals experienced more differentiated positive emotions and higher emotional clarity than usual when they were in more (vs. less) familiar situations. Familiarity was especially predictive of higher positive emotion differentiation among relatively older (vs. younger) adults. These findings suggest positive emotion differentiation, particularly in familiar situations could be a way in which the quality of one's emotional experience changes with age.

Keywords: emotion differentiation, emotional clarity, social context, adult development

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Clearly perceiving how one currently feels and being able to describe the nuances of one's emotional experience (e.g., feeling only a bit angry but very sad during a conflict with a friend) is an important basis for acting on and managing one's emotional experiences (e.g., Kalokerinos et al., 2019). Emotions are experienced in a variety of daily situations, and initial research suggests that across situations people vary in how much they distinguish between their emotions (i.e., emotion differentiation) and how clear they are about what

they are feeling (i.e., emotional clarity), highlighting the need to investigate how these momentary fluctuations arise. In line with theories of social construction (e.g., Mesquita et al., 2016) and social functions (e.g., Keltner & Haidt, 1999) of emotion, social context could contribute to how clear and differentiated individuals are about their emotions, especially among older adults whose emotional well-being is more strongly tied to their social environments (Carstensen et al., 1999) and for people who are more extraverted or more socially connected. Further, emotions have been theorized to represent the meaning one makes of their environment (Barrett et al., 2007), and this process is potentially facilitated by being in situations that one has previously encountered (i.e., familiar ones). Older adults' emotion awareness might particularly benefit when they can rely on their life experiences (Blanchard-Fields, 2007). In the present study, we test whether the effects of social and familiar aspects of the context are associated with emotion differentiation and emotional clarity and examine whether age moderates these effects in an adult sample.

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Emotion Differentiation

Emotion differentiation, also referred to as emotional granularity, describes the extent to which people can describe their emotions in nuanced ways (i.e., distinguishing between the degree to which different negative or positive emotions are experienced on a day-to-day basis; Thompson et al., 2021). Emotion differentiation has been studied as an individual difference in clinical and nonclinical settings (Thompson et al., 2021). More recently, emotion differentiation has also been shown to vary within-individuals on a moment-by-moment basis (Erbas et al., 2022).

Research has linked emotion differentiation to individual differences in outcomes and predictors. People who in general differentiate more between their emotions show higher well-being (Kashdan et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2021). When examining the reasons why differences in emotion differentiation might arise, research has focused largely on explanations at the level of the person, such as one's personality traits (e.g., individuals with higher levels of neuroticism show lower emotion differentiation; Erbas et al., 2014). Researchers have also investigated whether individuals differ in their emotion differentiation across adulthood, but results are mixed. Some studies have found that older age in adults is associated with higher levels of emotion differentiation (Carstensen et al., 2000; Mankus et al., 2016), whereas others have shown that younger age is associated with higher levels of emotion differentiation (Hay & Diehl, 2011).

Emotion differentiation can fluctuate within an individual over shorter periods of time as well. When people experience more stress, for example, they tend to be less differentiated in their perceptions of their emotions compared to times when they experience less stress (Erbas et al., 2018). This initial evidence of within-individual differences highlights the importance of investigating the role momentary factors play in emotion differentiation (Thompson et al., 2021).

Emotional Clarity

Emotional clarity is defined as the meta-knowledge of one's emotion experience and one's ability to unambiguously identify how one is feeling (Palmieri et al., 2009). Research has linked emotional clarity to a variety of individual differences. Lower levels of emotional clarity are associated with personality traits such as neuroticism (Thompson et al., 2015), and initial research suggests that individuals increase in emotional clarity as they age (Mankus et al., 2016; Orgeta, 2009). In addition, emotional clarity has been linked to healthy repertoires of emotion regulation strategy use (Pugach et al., 2020). Lastly, people with higher emotional clarity show fewer internalizing symptoms due to more successful emotion regulation (Park & Naragon-Gainey, 2019) and are less likely to have major depressive disorder (Thompson et al., 2015) or social anxiety disorder (Thompson et al., 2017).

In addition to individual differences in emotional clarity, research has shown that people can experience momentary fluctuations in emotional clarity (e.g., Bailen et al., 2019). Although most research has focused on how individuals differ in how clear they tend to be about their emotions, some work has reported that 66% of the total variance of momentary clarity is at the within-person level (Park & Naragon-Gainey, 2019), suggesting that the situation plays a role in how clear individuals are about their emotions. In terms of situational predictors of these fluctuations, momentary emotional clarity has been found to be elevated when individuals experience a significant event, particularly when this event is positive, and clarity is positively associated with the number of people individuals are interacting with (Thompson & Boden, 2019). These initial findings highlight the need to further investigate and focus on contextual effects on emotional clarity.

Although both emotional clarity and emotion differentiation fall under the larger umbrella of emotional understanding, these constructs have been empirically distinguished (Boden & Thompson, 2017; Boden et al., 2013) and are theoretically distinct. To illustrate, it is possible that one experiences a high degree of clarity of what one is feeling (i.e., high level of emotional clarity), yet reports

experiencing similar levels of emotions, such as anger and sadness (i.e., low level of emotion differentiation). Although the measurement of emotion differentiation invokes the use of emotion words (which requires access to one's emotional experience), the experience of differentiated emotions does not per se require subjective awareness, and the subjective awareness of one's emotions does not require the experience of differentiated emotions. Historically, emotion differentiation and emotional clarity emerged from different theoretical orientation toward the research on emotions (i.e., constructivist vs. appraisal theories, respectively; Hoemann et al., 2021) and considering both aspects of emotion understanding can provide a more wholistic picture of how emotional processes occur in daily situations.

The Role of Context for Emotion Differentiation and Emotional Clarity

Emotion researchers have called for the consideration of context when examining how individuals experience and regulate their emotions, particularly highlighting the need to consider person and situation variables as well as their joint effects (Greenaway et al., 2018). Regarding emotion differentiation and emotional clarity, this contextual perspective suggests that people might vary in how differentiated and clear they are about their emotions in certain situations (e.g., when with others vs. alone) and that the role of situational context might differ based on individual-level characteristics.

In line with the functional and constructivist theories of emotion (Barrett et al., 2007; Keltner & Haidt, 1999), differentiation of and clarity about one's emotional experience could depend on certain aspects of the situation. One important contextual feature includes social aspects of the situation. From the perspective that emotions have evolved to fulfill certain functions, specific emotions are seen as playing distinct roles in social relationships, such as anger informing others about whether social norms are violated (Keltner & Haidt, 1999) and sadness informing oneself about the potential loss of social relationships (Levenson, 1999). Others propose that emotion experiences are not universal and can differ from one cultural group to another, yet they are constructed to fulfill specific sociocultural functions. For example, shame is more common and produces adherence to group norms in more interdependent compared to more independent cultures (Mesquita & Boiger, 2014). Interacting with other people could lead individuals to experience more differentiated emotions as social settings may require the experience of distinct emotional states (e.g., feeling angry in a conflict situation, feeling sad saying goodbye to a friend). When interacting with other people, individuals might be more likely to rely on more granular mental representations of emotions to capture the complexities of interpersonal interactions. In addition, research has shown that individuals are clearer about their emotions in situations that involve more people (Thompson & Boden, 2019), potentially because of the presence of clues in the social environment that make it easier for individuals to understand their emotional experience.

Given that emotions have been described as corresponding to the meaning someone makes of a situation (e.g., Barrett et al., 2007), situations that are more familiar (i.e., experienced before) could be more likely to align with differentiated and clear emotional states. In situations that are less familiar, emotional states may be relatively more unknown to the person experiencing them. As individuals use their knowledge of emotion concepts to identify their emotions

(Lindquist et al., 2015), it is likely that they are more differentiated in situations with which they are familiar and have been able to develop a more differentiated emotion concept of the specific situation.

Individual Differences in the Role of Context for Emotion Differentiation and Emotional Clarity

Research has emphasized the impact of situation factors when considering individuals' development across the lifespan. Age-related differences in situational contexts can drive differences in emotional experiences. For example, changes in daily stressors contribute to changes in emotional variability as individuals age (Brose et al., 2013) and selective narrowing of one's social network contributes to more positive emotional experiences (English & Carstensen, 2014). Recent work has directed more attention to how immediate contexts may differentially impact individuals across adulthood (Springstein et al., 2022), meaning that compared to younger adults, older adults might particularly benefit from being in specific situations (e.g., with close others or in familiar, less arousing environments). Considering the interplay between situations and individual differences may be particularly fruitful in areas such as emotion differentiation where results regarding changes across adulthood that do not consider daily situations are mixed (e.g., Carstensen et al., 2000; Hay & Diehl, 2011). Investigating whether individuals differ in how their daily contexts relate to aspects of their emotional experience may help provide greater insight about situational influences on emotion.

The ways that emotion differentiation and emotional clarity vary across situations may depend on developmental processes and certain individual difference factors. First, as individuals age, their social environment is assumed to occupy a more central role in their emotion experience and regulation (Carstensen et al., 1999). Accordingly, older adults might more heavily rely on their social environment to understand their emotions compared to younger adults.

Second, extraversion is a personality trait that describes someone's tendency to be sociable, active, and assertive (John & Srivastava, 1999). More extraverted people have been shown to pay more attention during social situations (Fishman et al., 2011). This heightened attention to social clues may facilitate the experience of more differentiated and clear emotions when around others versus by themselves.

Third, the types of social environments that individuals encounter in their daily lives also differ, with some people being more supported by and feeling more connected to their social environment (Hawkey & Cacioppo, 2010). Individuals who experience more connectedness to their social environment might be more differentiated and clearer about their emotions in social situations due to potentially engaging in more meaningful social interactions in their daily lives.

Lastly, as individuals age, they increasingly rely on life experience to manage their emotions (Blanchard-Fields, 2007). Life experience is most likely beneficial when situations are familiar (i.e., previous knowledge can be directly used). Therefore, older adults even more so than younger adults might benefit from being in familiar situations in terms of experiencing higher emotional clarity and more differentiated emotions due to increased life experience.

Present Research

The present research seeks to investigate how the situational context is related to momentary emotion differentiation and emotional

clarity as well as potential person-based differences in these associations. First, we tested the hypotheses that people are more differentiated and clearer about their emotions in social situations (vs. alone; H1), with the latter hypothesis conceptually replicating previous work (Thompson & Boden, 2019). Second, we tested the hypotheses that certain people (i.e., based on socially relevant individual differences) are more differentiated and clearer in their emotions in social situations than when alone (H2). Specifically, we examined the hypotheses that older adults, people higher in extraversion, and those generally higher in social connectedness are more differentiated and clearer in their emotions in social situations than those who are younger, lower in extraversion, and lower in social connectedness.

Third, social situations could represent more familiar situations, especially for certain individuals (e.g., older adults who spend time with more familiar social partners; Carstensen et al., 1999). As adults get older, they are often surrounded by familiar individuals in their day-to-day life (e.g., a spouse or other family members) due to the selective narrowing of their social networks (Luong et al., 2011) and social interactions might occur in more familiar environments such as one's home or the homes of friends and familiar members. We tested whether results for effects of being with others (vs. alone) hold when accounting for familiarity of situations (H3). We also hypothesized that individuals experience more differentiated and clearer emotions when they are in familiar situations (H4),¹ and these effects are stronger for older adults compared to younger adults (H5). Due to the inconsistency of prior results for differentiating positive emotions (Liu et al., 2020), our hypotheses focus on negative emotion differentiation. However, as preregistered we also explored the effects for positive emotion differentiation. To ensure that associations between variables were not confounded by temporal effects (e.g., simultaneous increases in emotion differentiation and situational familiarity over the sampling period leading to a spurious correlation between these variables), we included time since the beginning of the study as a within-person variable. In addition, we report three sets of exploratory analyses. First, we tested different types of operationalizations of social context (i.e., only counting current social interactions, time since the last interaction). Second, we tested whether other individual differences, namely gender and Big Five personality traits beyond extraversion played a role in how momentary emotion differentiation and emotional clarity related to social and familiar contexts. Lastly, we tested whether there were cross-lagged associations between emotion differentiation or clarity, and social or familiar contexts and whether contemporaneous effects would emerge once cross-lagged effects were accounted for.

Method

Participants

Participants ($N = 290$) aged 25–84 years ($M = 52.81$, $SD = 15.93$) were recruited in St. Louis between 2018 and 2021 for a larger study on cognitive and social aspects of emotion regulation. The sample size was determined based on considerations for that

¹ The preregistration did not include these hypotheses about the main effects of familiarity, but they served as the rationale for the preregistered hypotheses about controlling for familiarity when testing robustness of the effects of the presence of a social partner.

larger study. People were ineligible to participate if they did not read or speak English in their homes or had cognitive impairment as indicated by a score of two or above in the telephone version of the Ascertain Dementia eight-item Questionnaire (Galvin et al., 2005). Participants were 62% women, 38% men, and 1% were transgender or nonbinary. Individuals were representative of the racial diversity of the local area (73% White, 31% Black, 3% American Indian, 3% Asian, 2% Hispanic, with individuals endorsing as many ethnicities as applied). As preregistered, people who did not show any variance in social context (i.e., indicated by being themselves at every prompt or indicate being with other people at every prompt) were excluded from the analyses ($n = 12$). Additionally, one participant did not complete trait reports ($n = 1$), leaving 277 participants for the analyses.

Procedure

Participants completed a three-part study, which included two in-lab sessions that bookended a 10-day experience sampling period.² Participants reported their well-being and completed others measures unrelated to the present study during the first lab session. They also completed a tutorial on the experience sampling procedure to ensure sufficient understanding of the items. Using an experience sampling approach, participants were randomly surveyed 6 times a day during a 12-hr window of their choice for 10 days. Within this 12-hr window, participants were randomly prompted once in every 2-hr block. If they did not respond immediately, participants were reminded to respond to the survey after 5 min. Once they were prompted, participants had a 15-min window to respond to the survey in which they first responded to a question about their emotions and emotion regulation and then provided information on their current context. Participants were unable to respond to the survey or change their responses once this survey window had closed. On average surveys were administered 143.95 min ($SD = 82.05$) apart within day. On average, participants completed 41.97 prompts ($SD = 13.15$; 70%), with the range being 2–60 (3%–100%). No minimum threshold for compliance was used for data to be included. Financial compensation was provided at the end of each session (\$15/hr), with experience sampling compensation (\$30) provided at the end of Session 2.

Measures

Momentary Positive and Negative Emotions

Momentary emotions were assessed through asking participants to rate their experience of a list of emotions (“At the time of the prompt, I felt___”) on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). The negative emotions included were: stressed, angry, nervous, disgusted, sad, sluggish, and bored (between-person $\omega = .67$ within-person $\omega = .91$; Geldhof et al., 2014). The positive emotions included were: excited, enthusiastic, happy, peaceful, relaxed, and grateful (between-person $\omega = .82$ within-person $\omega = .94$). Items were chosen to represent both high and low-arousal emotions to capture the emotion circumplex model (Russell, 1980). Composite variables of positive and negative emotions were created by averaging respective ratings at the survey level.

Momentary Emotion Differentiation and Emotional Clarity

Momentary emotion differentiation was calculated following the approach presented by Erbas et al. (2022). This momentary emotion

differentiation index is directly derived from the classical emotion differentiation index, the intraclass correlation (ICC). This index estimates emotion differentiation at a specific time-point relative to the person’s overall level of emotion differentiation (i.e., it captures within-person fluctuations in emotion differentiation). Using R code provided by Erbas et al. (2022), we calculated momentary index, separately for positive and for negative emotions, which involved person-mean centering each emotion, computing the means of the (centered) emotions for each time-point, multiplying this by the number of emotions, and then taking its square. The resulting value is the numerator of the equation. Next, we computed variance for each of the centered emotions and took the sum of the variances of all emotions. This value is the denominator of the equation. As is commonly done for emotion differentiation measures, the resulting ratio is then multiplied by -1 , so that higher values indicate higher emotion differentiation. By default, negative ICCs (i.e., improbable values) were excluded during these calculations. Finally, visual inspection of qq-plots suggested skewness of the differentiation variables, so we log-transformed these indices.

To assess momentary emotional clarity, participants responded to the prompt “At the time of the prompt, I was clear about my feelings.” on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) as was done in Bailen et al. (2019). This item is the item with the highest factor loading on the Clarity of Feelings subscale of the Trait Meta Mood Scale (Salovey et al., 1995), but modified for momentary assessment by adding “at the time of prompt” and changing the sentence structure to past tense.

Situational Context

To assess social context participants were asked “When was the last time you interacted with someone?” and could choose from the following options: At the time of the prompt, 1–30 min before the prompt, 31–60 min before the prompt, 1–2 hr before the prompt, 2–3 hr before the prompt, or more than 3 hr before the prompt. During the experience sampling tutorial, participants were told that interactions can be in person or on the phone if interactions involved a back and forth with someone. To compute a binary indicator of whether the situation was social, we coded the variable as 1 if responding “At the time of the prompt” or “1–30 min before the prompt,” as emotions that were experienced when an interaction had very recently occurred (i.e., potentially up to 1 min before responding to the prompt) could be connected to the social interaction.

To assess the familiarity of participants’ current situation, we asked, “How familiar is the situation you were in at the time of the prompt?” and participants were asked to respond on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*).

Person-Level Variables

Extraversion was assessed using the Big Five Inventory 2 Extraversion Scale (Soto & John, 2017). Using a 5-point scale (1 = *disagree strongly*, 5 = *agree strongly*), participants indicate the extent to which each item generally describes them. An example

² Under alternate operations due to COVID-19, 78 participants completed an online survey with questionnaires, including the trait measures reported in this article, before the experience sampling portion, then they came into the lab for only one session.

item includes, “I am someone who ... is outgoing, sociable.” The 12 items on this subscale were average to create a composite score (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .88$).

Social connectedness was assessed through measures of social support and loneliness. Social support was assessed using the 12-item Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (Cohen et al., 1985; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .87$) and the 20-item UCLA Loneliness Scale (reverse-scored; Russell, 1980; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .88$). As preregistered, because these two scales were highly correlated ($r = .80$), we averaged them to obtain a social connectedness score.

Transparency and Openness

We report how we determined our sample size, and all measures in the study. All data, analysis code, and research materials are available at https://osf.io/g6ujz/?view_only=495e176c48e5476d9fd1d39139a22de. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Washington University in St. Louis approved the study (IRB ID: 201807088). All analyses were done in R Version 4.0.3 (R Core Team, 2021) and Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). This study’s design and its analysis were preregistered at https://osf.io/vym9g/?view_only=1332a7b95e7f4f2789b1ffb7c060142d.

Data Analytic Plan

Data preparation was done using R (R Core Team, 2021) and between- and within-person correlations were obtained using the psych package (Revelle, 2023). Models for main hypotheses were analyzed using multilevel structural equation modeling (ML-SEM) in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). ML-SEM was chosen as an analytic approach because it combines the advantages of multilevel modeling (i.e., modeling longitudinal data for multiple individuals) with structural equation modeling (i.e., modeling multiple outcome variables and latent variables). Bayesian estimation and default priors were used. Models were run using two Markov Chain Monte Carlo chains with 50,000 iterations each (using the default Gibbs sampler), and a thinning of 100. The convergence criterion was set to 1.005 by setting convergence option (BCONVERGE to 0.0025). Convergence and sufficient exploration of values were checked by visually examining trace plots and autocorrelation plots. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the paths that were tested. Although exploratory analyses tested autoregressive and cross-lagged effects, our main analyses only included contemporaneous effects. Using ML-SEM, we were able to estimate latent slopes for each person to estimate within-person associations (e.g., the association between social context and emotion differentiation) and were then able to assess how much slopes varied between individuals (e.g., differences in the association between social context and emotion differentiation based on age). To test H1 and H2, the model depicted in Figure 1 was tested without including familiarity. To test H3, familiarity was included as depicted in Figure 1. To test H4 and H5, the model depicted in Figure 2 was tested. Within-person associations were controlled for mean levels of affect. Assessing zero-order correlations between time since beginning the experience sampling study and the outcome variables of interest suggested that emotion differentiation and emotional clarity showed time trends that violated stationarity assumptions. To address this issue, time was included at the within-person level in all models as a predictor of emotion differentiation and emotional clarity to control for individual-level time trends in these variables. All effect

sizes reported are standardized effect sizes obtained through the STDYX option and thus can be interpreted as effects in standard deviation units. Significance was evaluated through Bayesian posterior probabilities ($< .05$) and 95% credible intervals (CIs). For exploratory models including autoregressive and cross-lagged effects (reported in the online supplemental materials), we utilized residual dynamic SEM to account for potential nonstationarity of variances over time (McNeish & Hamaker, 2020).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables of interest can be found in Table 1. ICCs indicated that momentary emotional clarity (.51), momentary negative affect (.50), momentary positive affect (.64), familiarity (.23), and social context (.18) showed variance at both the between- and within-person levels. Variance of emotional clarity and momentary negative affect at the within- and between-person level is about equally split, whereas most of the variance of familiarity and social context is at the within-person level. As momentary differentiation indices represent deviations from between-person differentiation, these indices showed no substantial between-person variance (Erbas et al., 2022), and between-person differentiation variables were obtained separately. At both the between- and within-person level, negative and positive emotional differentiation were significantly positively related, although the association was stronger at the between-person level. Momentary emotional clarity had a weak inverse association with negative and positive emotion differentiation at the within-person level, which suggests that emotion differentiation and emotional clarity are unique constructs.

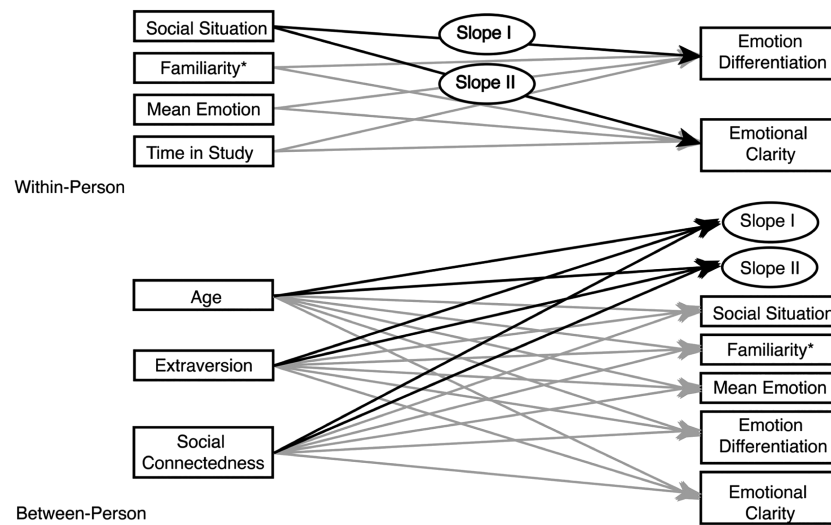
The within-person correlations show that on average people are more differentiated and clearer about their emotions in more familiar situations and less differentiated in their emotions when they are alone (vs. with others). Finally, older adults had higher between-person positive emotion differentiation than relatively younger adults, but age was not related to between-person negative emotion differentiation or emotional clarity. Time in study on average was associated with increases in positive emotion differentiation ($r = .03$, $p = .001$) but not with changes in momentary negative emotion differentiation ($r = .01$, $p = .391$) or emotional clarity ($r = -.01$, $p = .195$).

Is Social Context Associated With Higher Emotion Differentiation and Emotional Clarity?

We first tested the association between social context and momentary negative emotion differentiation on a within-person level (top part of Figure 1), meaning that we assessed whether across individuals, negative emotion differentiation differed when individuals were in a social situation versus alone. Contrary to our prediction (H1), being in a social situation was not related to momentary negative emotion differentiation ($\beta = .01$, $SD = .01$, 95% CI $[-.03, .04]$, $p = .287$), indicating that people on average are not more or less differentiated in their emotions when they are around other people. Our exploratory results show being in a social situation was negatively related to momentary positive emotion differentiation ($\beta = -.05$, $SD = .01$, 95% CI $[-.06, -.03]$, $p < .001$).

We then tested the association between social context and momentary emotional clarity on a within-person level (top part of Figure 1), meaning that we assessed whether across individuals,

Figure 1
Model Testing Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2



Note. * Familiarity will be added in an additional step. Hypothesized relationships are bolded.

emotional clarity differed when individuals were in a social situation versus alone. Contrary to our prediction (H1), being in a social situation was not significantly related to momentary emotional clarity ($\beta = .02$, $SD = .01$, 95% CI $[-.01, .05]$, $p = .079$), indicating that people on average are not more (or less) clear about their emotions when they are around other people.

Is Social Context More Strongly Associated With Higher Emotion Differentiation and Clarity for People Who Are Older, More Extraverted, or More Socially Connected?

We then tested whether the association between social context and negative momentary emotion differentiation varied by person-level variables (bottom part of Figure 1), meaning that we assessed whether negative emotion differentiation was more or less strongly linked to being in a social situation for some individuals than others. Contrary to our predictions (H2), we did not find evidence suggesting age ($\beta < -.01$, $SD = .05$, 95% CI $[-.11, .10]$, $p = .473$), extraversion ($\beta = -.02$, $SD = .18$, 95% CI $[-.13, .09]$, $p = .351$), or social connectedness ($\beta < .01$, $SD = .05$, 95% CI $[-.10, .11]$, $p = .481$), were associated with the strength of the association between social context and negative emotion differentiation. Table 2 displays the standardized results for all paths included in the model. For our exploratory analysis, a similar pattern of results emerged for positive emotion differentiation, with neither age ($\beta = -.03$, $SD = .10$, 95% CI $[-.31, .24]$, $p = .236$), extraversion ($\beta < -.01$, $SD = .14$, 95% CI $[-.30, .27]$, $p = .494$), nor social connectedness ($\beta = -.16$, $SD = .14$, 95% CI $[-.47, .09]$, $p = .141$) related to differences in the association of social situations and positive emotion differentiation. Table S1 in the online supplemental materials displays the standardized results for all paths included in the model.

We then tested whether the association between social context and momentary emotional clarity varied by person-level variables (bottom part of Figure 1), meaning that we assessed whether emotional

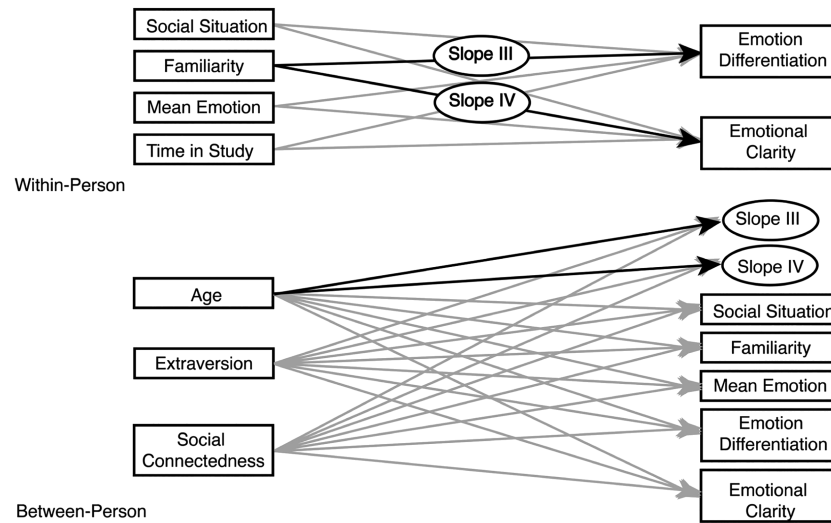
clarity was more or less strongly linked to being in a social situation for some individuals than others. Contrary to our predictions (H2), we did not find evidence suggesting age ($\beta = -.18$, $SD = .12$, 95% CI $[-.45, .03]$, $p = .042$), extraversion ($\beta = -.03$, $SD = .12$, 95% CI $[-.67, .20]$, $p = .119$), or social connectedness ($\beta = .10$, $SD = .12$, 95% CI $[-.12, .36]$, $p = .188$), were associated with the strength of the association between emotional clarity and social context.

Is Familiarity More Strongly Associated With Higher Emotion Differentiation and Emotional Clarity? And Is This Association Stronger for Older Adults?

Next, we tested the association between familiarity of the situation and momentary negative emotion differentiation on a within-person level (top part of Figure 2), meaning that we assessed whether across individuals, negative emotion differentiation varied depending on whether individuals were in a more familiar situation. Contrary to our hypothesis (H4), being in a more familiar situation was not related to momentary negative emotion differentiation ($\beta = .02$, $SD = .01$, 95% CI $[-.01, .04]$, $p = .087$), indicating that people on average were not more differentiated in their negative emotions when they are in situations that is more familiar. Table 3 displays the standardized results for all paths included in the model. Exploratory analyses of positive emotion differentiation revealed that being in a more familiar situation was related to higher momentary positive emotion differentiation ($\beta = .05$, $SD = .02$, 95% CI $[-.02, .08]$, $p < .001$). Table S2 in the online supplemental materials displays the standardized results for all paths included in the model.

We then tested whether the association between familiarity and momentary negative emotion differentiation varied by age (bottom part of Figure 2), assessing whether negative emotion differentiation was more strongly linked to being in a familiar situation for older or younger adults. Contrary to our prediction (H5), we did not find

Figure 2
Model Testing Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5



Note. Hypothesized relationships are bolded.

evidence suggesting age was associated with increased strength of the association between negative emotion differentiation and familiarity ($\beta = -.06$, $SD = .06$, 95% CI $[-.18, .05]$, $p = .153$). However, exploratory analyses revealed that age was associated with increased strength of the association between positive emotion differentiation and familiarity ($\beta = .21$, $SD = .10$, 95% CI $[.05, .44]$, $p = .009$). To further illustrate this effect, we computed unstandardized estimates of the average association of familiarity and positive emotion differentiation at age 30 (Est. = .35, $SD = .11$, 95% CI $[.14, .58]$, $p < .001$), age 50 (Est. = .46, $SD = .16$, 95% CI $[.17, .77]$, $p < .001$), and age 70 (Est. = .57, $SD = .20$, 95% CI $[.18, .94]$, $p < .001$), which showed that though the association between familiarity and positive emotion was stronger on average for people at age 70, it emerged across adulthood.

We then tested the association between familiarity and momentary emotional clarity on a within-person level (top part of Figure 2), assessing whether across individuals, emotional clarity differed when individuals were in a more (vs. less) familiar situation. In line with our prediction (H4), being in a familiar situation was related to higher momentary emotional clarity ($\beta = .10$, $SD = .01$, 95% CI $[.08, .12]$, $p < .001$), indicating that people on average are clearer about their emotions when they are in familiar situations.

We then tested whether the association between familiarity of the situation and momentary emotional clarity varied by age (bottom part of Figure 2). Contrary to our predictions (H5), we did not find evidence suggesting age ($\beta = .02$, $SD = .06$, 95% CI $[-.10, .15]$, $p = .363$) was associated with the strength of the association between emotional clarity and familiarity.

Discussion

The present research sought to investigate the association between situational context and momentary emotion differentiation and emotional clarity and investigate potential person-based differences in

these associations. Namely, we tested the hypotheses that people are more differentiated and clearer about their emotions in social situations. We also tested the hypotheses that older, more extraverted, and more socially connected individuals are particularly likely to be differentiated and clearer in their emotions in social situations. Lastly, we tested the hypotheses that people are more differentiated and clearer about their emotions in familiar situations, and that these associations are even stronger for older compared to younger adults.

In summary, we did not find support for the hypotheses that on average, people are more differentiated or clearer about their emotions in social situations. Instead, they were less differentiated in their positive emotions compared to when they were alone. We also did not find that older, more extraverted, or more socially connected individuals are particularly differentiated or clearer about their emotions in social situations. However, we did find support for an effect of familiarity. More specifically, individuals were more likely to differentiate between their positive emotions and be clearer about their emotion experience when they were in more familiar situations. We also found that older individuals are particularly likely to be more differentiated in their positive emotions when they are in more familiar situations.

In addition, we replicated prior work regarding associations between these emotional processes and provided more evidence speaking to potential age differences. Momentary positive and negative emotion differentiation were positively related to each other, in line with previous literature (e.g., Starr et al., 2017). Consistent with Boden et al. (2013), who found that trait levels of emotion differentiation and emotional clarity were unrelated, we found that positive and negative momentary emotion differentiation were unrelated to momentary emotional clarity, providing further evidence that emotion differentiation and emotional clarity are unique constructs.

Prior research has found that age is positively related to negative emotion differentiation (e.g., Mankus et al., 2016), and other research has found negative associations between emotion differentiation and age (e.g., Hay & Diehl, 2011). In the present study, we

Table 1*Between and Within-Person Correlations for Study Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Negative EmoDiff				.05**	-.03*	-.11**	.05**	-.01	.03**	—	—	—	—
2. Positive EmoDiff			.13*		-.02*	-.10**	.00	-.04**	.04**	—	—	—	—
3. Clarity	4.19	0.63	.08	-.08		-.04**	.23**	.01	.10**	—	—	—	—
4. Negative Emotions	1.53	0.43	-.16**	-.07	-.24**		-.45**	.00	-.13**	—	—	—	—
5. Positive Emotions	3.65	0.83	.13*	.08	.41**	-.08		.03**	.12**	—	—	—	—
6. Social Context	0.69	0.41	-.01	-.02	.06	-.04	-.01		-.10**	—	—	—	—
7. Familiarity	4.40	0.75	.11	.06	.45**	-.49**	.17**	-.09		—	—	—	—
8. Age	53.35	17.02	.00	.14*	.05	-.19**	.13*	-.26**	.18**		—	—	—
9. Extraversion	3.44	0.74	.01	.02	.22**	-.13*	.23**	.14*	.10	.04		—	—
10. Social Connectedness	0.01	0.95	.04	.00	.28**	-.12*	.27**	.29**	.08	.04	.39**		—
11. Loneliness	35.64	11.01	-.03	-.01	-.26**	.19**	-.24**	-.24**	-.11	-.10	-.40**	-.95**	
12. Social support	3.31	0.55	.05	-.02	.27**	-.04	.27**	.31**	-.04	-.02	.34**	.94**	-.78**

Note. *M* and *SD*s for momentary measures are average within-person *M* and *SD*s across participants. Between-person correlations are below the diagonal. Within-person associations for momentary measures are above the diagonal. EmoDiff = emotion differentiation. Between-person correlations for emotion differentiation are calculated using the traditional ICC-based person-level variable. Emotion differentiation variables were log transformed. Social connectedness = average *z*-scored loneliness and social support. *M* and *SD*s for participants included in analyses. ICC = intraclass correlation.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

found a positive correlation of age and between-person positive (not negative) emotion differentiation, suggesting that older adults differentiate more between their positive emotions on average than do younger adults. In addition, our findings replicate substantial research on emotional development across adulthood showing that older adults experience more positive and less negative emotion (e.g., Carstensen et al., 2011; Charles et al., 2023).

Our study also provided insight into the way daily life is structured across adulthood showing that older adults have less social interactions on average and tend to be in more familiar environments than

younger adults. Older adults have been shown to selectively narrow their social networks pruning out acquaintances and less close social partners (Luong et al., 2011), which could result in less frequent social interactions in daily life overall. However, other research has shown older adults to have more social interactions than younger adults, though this effect did not hold up once marital status was considered (Zhaoyang et al., 2018). These contrasting findings show that more research is needed to settle the question of how frequently older versus younger adults engage in social interactions in daily life. Regarding increased familiarity of the environment, our results align

Table 2*Standardized Fixed Effects From Multilevel Structural Equation Model for Social Situations*

Parameter	Estimate	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Within-person			
Negative Emotion → Negative EmoDiff	-.083	-.112	-.056
Negative Emotion → Clarity	-.064	-.089	-.035
Social → Negative EmoDiff (Slope 1)	.010	-.025	.043
Social → Clarity (Slope 2)	.020	-.007	.048
Time → Negative EmoDiff	.001	-.044	.043
Time → Clarity	.000	-.002	.001
Between-person			
Age → Slope 1	-.004	-.125	.088
Age → Slope 2	-.184	-.451	.026
Age → Negative Emotion	-.210	-.288	-.128
Age → Negative EmoDiff	.179	-.079	.433
Age → Clarity	.055	-.030	.139
Age → Social	-.160	-.246	-.069
Extraversion → Slope 1	-.020	-.125	.088
Extraversion → Slope 2	-.031	-.265	.196
Extraversion → Negative Emotion	-.132	-.215	-.043
Extraversion → Negative EmoDiff	.313	.038	.572
Extraversion → Clarity	.163	.075	.248
Extraversion → Social	.160	.070	.250
Social Connectedness → Slope 1	.003	-.125	.088
Social Connectedness → Slope 2	-.031	-.265	.196
Social Connectedness → Negative Emotion	-.020	-.215	-.043
Social Connectedness → Negative EmoDiff	-.115	-.386	.145
Social Connectedness → Clarity	.090	-.001	.175
Social Connectedness → Social	.038	-.055	.129

Note. EmoDiff = Emotion Differentiation; CI = Credible Interval. Bolding indicates CI that excludes 0.

Table 3
Standardized Fixed Effects From Multilevel Structural Equation Model for Familiar Situations

Parameter	Estimate	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Within-person			
Negative Emotion → Negative EmoDiff	-.105	-.124	-.085
Negative Emotion → Clarity	-.037	-.056	-.018
Familiar → Negative EmoDiff (Slope 3)	.017	-.008	.042
Familiar → Clarity (Slope 4)	.103	.080	.123
Social → Negative EmoDiff	-.007	-.027	.013
Social → Clarity	.017	-.001	.036
Time → Negative EmoDiff	.005	-.017	.027
Time → Clarity	-.002	-.008	.003
Between-person			
Age → Slope 3	-.058	-.181	.051
Age → Slope 4	.020	-.097	.145
Age → Negative Emotion	-.187	-.266	-.103
Age → Negative EmoDiff	.062	-.033	.153
Age → Clarity	.051	-.039	.136
Age → Social	-.189	-.269	-.099
Age → Familiar	.202	.114	.285
Extraversion → Slope 3	-.014	-.124	.106
Extraversion → Slope 4	.206	.075	.330
Extraversion → Negative Emotion	-.048	-.137	.045
Extraversion → Negative EmoDiff	.111	-.014	.208
Extraversion → Clarity	.079	-.015	.171
Extraversion → Social	.039	-.058	.128
Extraversion → Familiar	.058	-.039	.157
Social Connectedness → Slope 3	.103	-.014	.219
Social Connectedness → Slope 4	-.032	-.162	.096
Social Connectedness → Negative emotion	-.114	-.201	-.024
Social Connectedness → Negative EmoDiff	.014	-.123	.078
Social Connectedness → Clarity	.165	.077	.246
Social Connectedness → Social	.184	.086	.274
Social Connectedness → Familiar	.040	-.054	.134

Note. EmoDiff = Emotion Differentiation; CI = Credible Interval. Bolding indicates CI that excludes 0.

with findings showing, for example, that older adults tend to experience less variability in daily stressors (Brose et al., 2013).

Social Context and Higher Emotion Differentiation and Emotional Clarity

Contrary to our predictions, being in social situations was associated with less momentary emotion differentiation. This finding may reflect the heterogeneous nature of social interactions and the need to take a more fine-grained view of social situations. Social situations might differ depending on intimacy with interaction partners, conflict potential, or the support and feedback that one's interaction partner provides (Pauw et al., 2022; Peters et al., 2018). These qualities of social interactions might impact how individuals regulate, experience, and express their emotions. For example, people are less likely to suppress the expression of their emotions with others that are perceived as supportive (Pauw et al., 2022), and engaging in capitalization, sharing one's positive emotions, with someone who is responsive increases the bond between interaction partners and impacts the emotional experience of the sharer (Peters et al., 2018). These findings highlight the importance of assessing more partner characteristics when studying emotional processes such as emotion differentiation in social situations, as aggregation across these different types of social situations in our study might have obscured our effects.

Along these lines, Sels et al. (2022) predicted that sharing one's emotions with social partners would increase momentary emotion

differentiation, and the association between social sharing and emotion differentiation would be moderated by rumination. Instead, they found that when individuals engage in social sharing, they decrease in momentary emotion differentiation. However, as expected, this association depended on whether individuals engaged in rumination: when levels of rumination were low, social sharing predicted higher levels of emotion differentiation, but at high levels of rumination, the association reversed. It could be that the results from the present study could be explained by social interactions offering the possibility to discuss one's emotions with other partners and ruminating about them. As some studies have shown that labeling of emotions is not necessarily associated with a more differentiated emotional experience (Ottenstein & Lischetzke, 2020; Williams & Uliaszek, 2022), it is possible that discussing or ruminating over one's emotions with others might decrease emotion differentiation in some cases, which should be explicitly assessed in future studies.

It has been theorized that emotion experiences are less complex when individuals are experiencing high cognitive demand (Labouvie-Vief et al., 2009). In challenging social interactions, social conflict, or complex group processes a lot of cognitive resources might be needed, leaving less resources to differentiate and clearly reflect on one's own emotional state. Future research should investigate the cognitive demand of different types of social interactions and explore how they may impact one's ability to differentiate and clearly perceive emotion.

Contrary to previous work (Thompson & Boden, 2019), we did not find that momentary emotional clarity was higher in social

situations. However, we compared social to nonsocial situations rather than examining the number of interaction partners people engaged with as was done in [Thompson and Boden \(2019\)](#). Given these divergent findings, emotional clarity may increase with the number of people someone is interacting with, but not necessarily when interacting with someone compared to when being alone. Future work should investigate social context on a more nuanced level (e.g., type and number of partners, level of engagement) to understand how social context influences emotional awareness processes.

The emotions assessed in the present study were chosen to represent both high and low-arousal emotions to capture the affective circumplex model ([Russell, 1980](#)). However, our results might have differed had we explicitly considered emotion terms that are distinctly social in nature such as embarrassment, guilt, envy, or affection ([Hareli & Parkinson, 2008](#)). With these types of emotions being more likely in a social setting, measurement of emotion that does not include these social emotions, like in the current study, might make participants more likely to report co-occurring or less specific emotion terms in exchange. This highlights the limitations of emotion differentiation measures that rely on predetermined instead of participant generated (e.g., [Ottenstein & Lischetzke, 2020](#)) emotions. Future studies should either explicitly consider social emotions or rely on different response formats such as open responses to further investigate.

Lastly, we did not find that individual differences such as age, extraversion, or social connectedness impacted how social context is related to emotion differentiation and emotional clarity. Regardless of these person-related factors, being in social situations is associated with being less differentiated in one's emotions (e.g., experiencing less distinct levels of emotions such as anger, sadness, or anxiety) and with no differences in how clear one is about one's emotion experience. It has been theorized that as older adults experience diminishing cognitive resources, they increasingly rely on social resources for their emotion regulation ([Urry & Gross, 2010](#)). Though emotion differentiation has been associated with increased emotion regulation success ([Kalokerinos et al., 2019](#)), our data does not support the idea that older adults experience higher emotion differentiation when social partners are available, so increased emotion differentiation in social environments may not be a mechanism through which emotional well-being is maintained as individuals age.

Familiarity and Higher Emotion Differentiation and Emotional Clarity

Our results show that people are more differentiated in their positive emotions and report higher emotional clarity when they are in more (vs. less) familiar situations. This suggests that individuals can apply their more granular emotion concepts to identify their emotions ([Lindquist et al., 2015](#)) more easily in situations for which they possess previous experience. This finding supports the theory that emotions are constructed based on the situations that individuals experience, as individuals can experience their emotions in a more differentiated way when they experience situations that they are familiar with. On the other hand, this finding could suggest that in unfamiliar situations individuals might be less likely to successfully regulate their emotions due to lower emotion differentiation ([Kalokerinos et al., 2019](#)). It has been theorized that knowing

which emotion is felt enables emotion regulation efforts ([Barrett et al., 2001](#)). However, some studies have shown that when being prompted to concretely label one's emotional state this can be counterproductive for emotion regulation efforts ([Nook et al., 2021](#); [Vine et al., 2019](#)). Accordingly, emotion regulation may be facilitated by experiencing emotions in a differentiated way, rather than the act of labeling a distinct emotional state. Thus far, research on the improved implementation of emotion regulation in daily life with higher emotion differentiation are based on individual differences in emotion differentiation rather than within-person differences in how much people differentiate their emotions in a given moment. Therefore, future research should investigate whether, how, and for whom successful emotion regulation in contexts with varying levels of familiarity is possible.

Being in familiar situations allows for older adults to draw on their accumulated life experience for understanding and managing their emotions ([Blanchard-Fields, 2007](#)). In line with this idea, our results suggest that the distinctiveness of particularly older adults' positive emotions depends on being in familiar situations. In addition, several lifespan developmental theories highlight the role of familiar contexts in helping older adults process and manage their emotions (for a review, see [Springstein et al., 2023](#)). For example, dynamic integration theory ([Labouvie-Vief, 2003](#)) suggests that older adults benefit from relying on automated cognitive-emotional knowledge when in familiar situations. Similarly, the strengths and vulnerabilities integration ([Charles, 2010](#)) model suggests that in familiar situations older adults may capitalizing on their strengths, including knowledge about themselves and expertise in experiencing and managing emotions. Additionally, selective engagement theory ([Hess, 2014](#)) suggests that older adults are selective about when they choose to mobilize their limited cognitive resources, and being in familiar situations that are less complex might allow older adults to direct more resources toward the perception and understanding of their emotions than being in unfamiliar situations. Other characteristics of familiar situations, such as their low novelty and higher predictability, might also be differential contextual mechanisms. Future work is needed to isolate these more nuanced aspects of context and how they impact emotion processing across adulthood.

Given that older adults tend to avoid emotional situations that contain high levels of arousal ([Sands & Isaacowitz, 2017](#)), the situations that they are more familiar with may be less likely to contain high levels of arousal and therefore allow older adults to leverage their strengths at processing and regulating emotions. However, it has been suggested that older adults who engage in more diverse activities in daily life experience more rich and balanced emotions throughout their day-to-day life ([Lee et al., 2022](#)). It is possible that being familiar with a variety of contexts rather than remaining in the same situations (e.g., staying at home consistently) enables individuals to experience differentiated and rich positive emotions. This should be explicitly assessed in future studies.

Interestingly, with increasing age, the familiarity of situations was more strongly associated with positive emotion differentiation, but not emotional clarity. In contrast to emotional clarity, emotion differentiation does not require subjective awareness *per se* ([Hoemann et al., 2021](#)). Research has shown that emotion differentiation and emotional clarity are distinct, as emotional clarity describes the subjective perception of understanding one's emotion whereas emotion differentiation describes the nuances in individuals' emotion experiences ([Boden et al., 2013](#)). For our findings, this

means that while older adults report experiencing their emotions on a more granular level (e.g., experiencing more specific instances of excitement, calmness, or happiness) in familiar settings, this differentiation does not go along with the subjective perception of being clearer about one's emotions.

Future Directions and Limitations

To further probe the impact of being in a social context, future research should more closely investigate the nature of social situations and their effect on emotion differentiation and emotional clarity. Considering alternative ways of operationalizing social context beyond the objective presence of others could provide further information relating to our research questions. For example, it is possible that effects on differentiation or emotional clarity could be based on (a) more nuanced perceptions of the social situations (i.e., psychological situations or the way individuals subjectively interpret objective cues in their environment; Rauthmann et al., 2014), (b) whether social situations are interpreted as adverse, deceptive or positive, or (c) vary depending on whether individuals hold certain social goals (e.g., wanting to be close to the partner). Though exploratory analyses showed that personality traits such as openness, neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness impacted the associations between situation factors and emotion differentiation and emotional clarity, we did not find that trait level extraversion impacts how differentiated or clear people are in social situations. Recent work has shown that how extraverted individuals act on a momentary basis has well-being consequences (Jacques-Hamilton et al., 2019; Margolis & Lyubomirsky, 2020). It is possible that fluctuations in state-level personality (e.g., acting more extraverted than usually) impacts how emotions are processed in different situations. Future work should explicitly consider the role of not only trait but also state-level personality.

Additionally, while initial research has shown that momentary emotion differentiation (Erbs et al., 2022) and emotional clarity (Thompson & Boden, 2019) are associated with momentary well-being, it has not been tested what are the benefits of being more or less emotionally aware in specific situations. Future research should examine whether and how context-based fluctuations in emotion awareness relate to adaptive outcomes in the moment (e.g., is increased emotion differentiation in social interactions beneficial for the interaction outcomes?) and more broadly (e.g., do individuals that vary in how differentiated their emotions are based on the familiarity of their situations show higher well-being in general?). In addition, research should investigate how age or other person-specific factors might moderate these effects.

Recently, attention has been raised regarding the heterogeneity in the operationalization and measurement of emotion differentiation (Thompson et al., 2021). While ICC-based measures of emotion differentiation, such as the one used in our study, are prevalent in the literature, they have several drawbacks. For instance, while our measure of differentiation was calculated separately by valence it does not account for the arousal of the emotions. In addition, while our measure captures the distinctiveness in intensity of emotions, it does not capture how frequently these different emotions are experienced. Lastly, although it is often implied that low differentiation reflects poor understanding or labeling of one's emotions, our measure of differentiation only captures whether emotions are experienced more or less distinctly from other emotions. Future

work should make use of recent innovations in measuring momentary differentiation (e.g., Lane & Trull, 2022) to assess how situational variables relate to fluctuation in differentiation across operationalizations.

Our study involved participants across adulthood but did not include any participants younger than 25, so our results might not generalize to children, adolescents, or young adults. Emotion differentiation develops curvilinearly early in life, as children tend to experience emotions one at a time before experiencing more mixed states in adolescence (Nook et al., 2018). Momentary fluctuations in how differentiated emotions are experienced thus might not be evident in children and situational predictors (e.g., familiarity) may be less relevant.

In addition, our study was conducted in the United States, so our results might not generalize beyond similar Western cultures. In cultures that are more interdependent than the United States, emotion experiences are expected to arise predominantly from social contexts and collective, shared situations (Uchida et al., 2022). We expect that aspects of the social context may be more strongly tied to momentary emotion differentiation and emotional clarity among individuals socialized in more interdependent cultures compared to participants in the present study.

Our study was focused on examining situational correlates of emotion differentiation and emotional clarity. We hypothesized that individuals would be more differentiated and clearer about their emotions in situations where their emotions can fulfill social functions (i.e., when with someone else rather than alone). Although we did not find support for this hypothesis, on average individuals did experience more differentiated positive emotions and clearer emotions when they were in more familiar situations, highlighting how previous exposure to situations might contribute to the experience of more granular emotional concepts (at least for positive emotions) and to the subjective experience of emotional awareness. With increasing age, adults showed higher positive emotion differentiation on average and a particularly strong association between familiarity and positive emotion differentiation. These findings suggest higher positive emotion differentiation, particularly in familiar situations, describes the daily emotional experience of older adults. Our findings also support the perspective that older adults' emotional experience benefits from wisdom accrued over the lifespan, such that the quality of older adults' emotional experience depends on when their daily contexts afford for them to draw on their prior experiences.

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