Mimicking the Facial Expressions of Masked Faces Does Not Restore Empathetic Responses Towards Them

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INTRODUCTION

Face masks reduce health risks but also obscure facial cues

Masks reduce the ability to share positive emotional states, known as positive affective empathy

Masks reduce affiliative facial mimicry, which is the perceiver's imitation of the expresser's emotional display

Our question: Does the reduction of facial mimicry contribute to the impairment in positive empathy when masks are used?
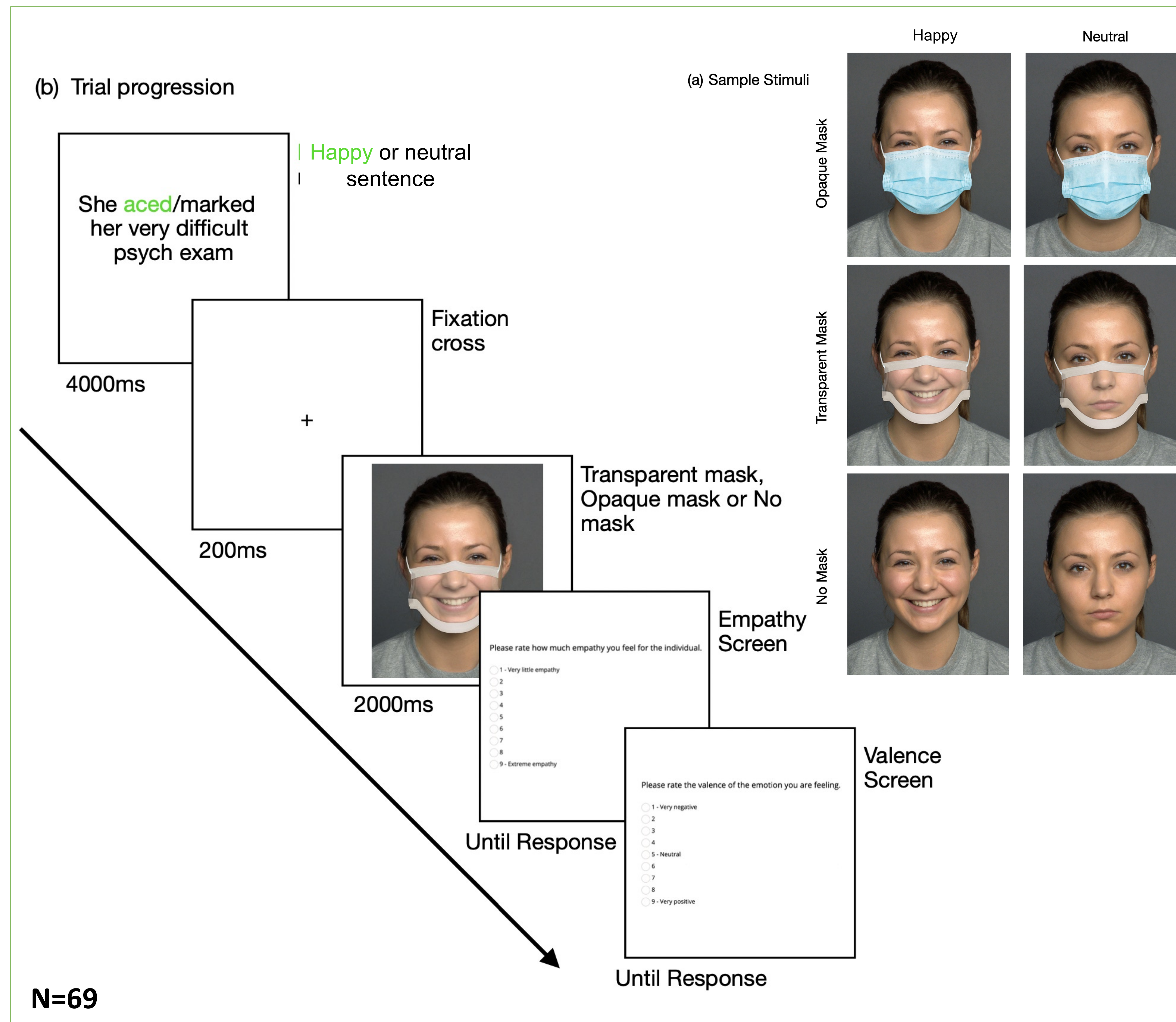
CONCLUSION

Face masks reduce positive empathy

Smiling to mimic positive emotions enhances positive empathy

Mimicry does NOT counter the effect of Masks in emotion perception, suggesting that face masks impair empathy through a different mechanism
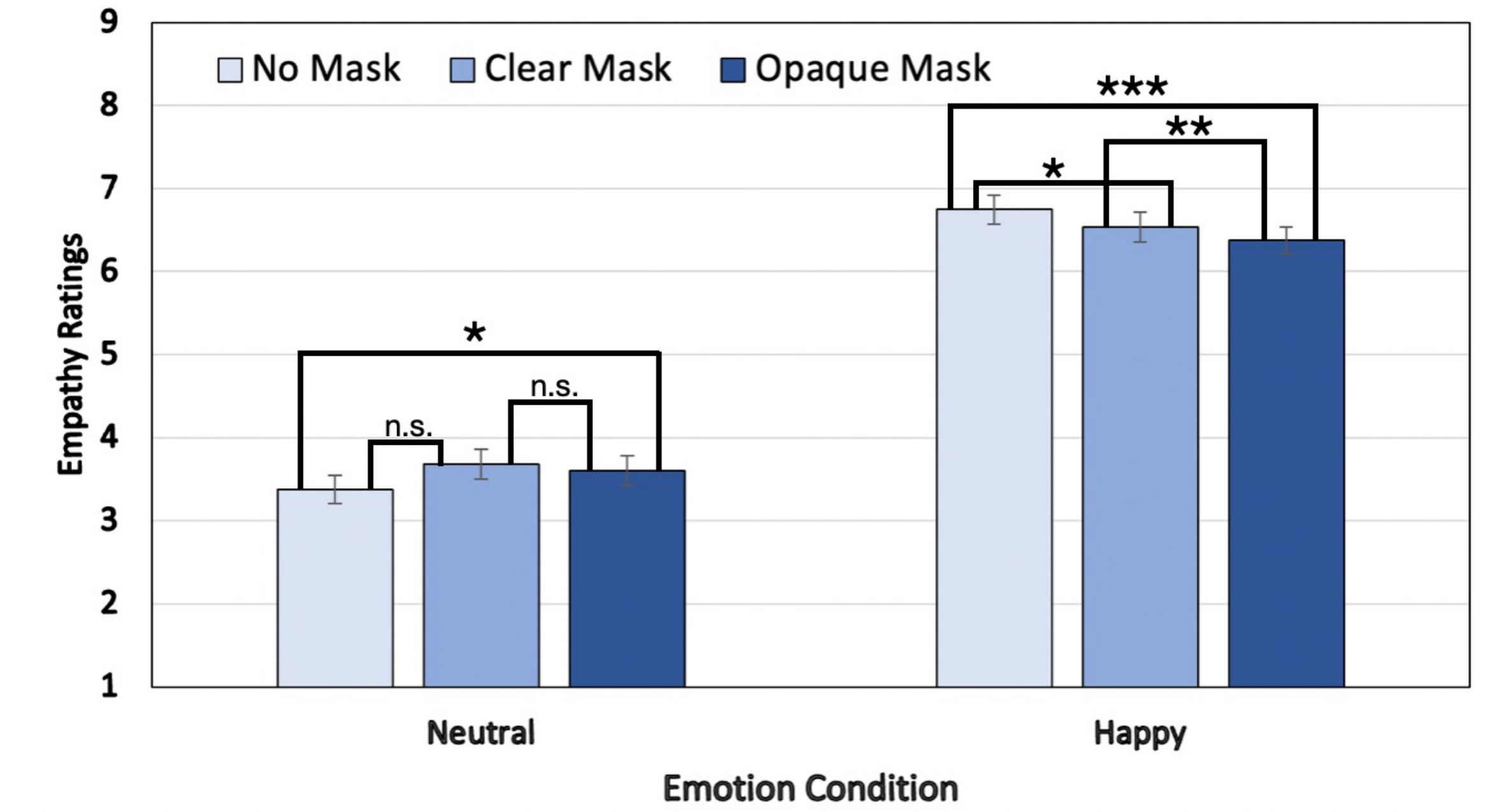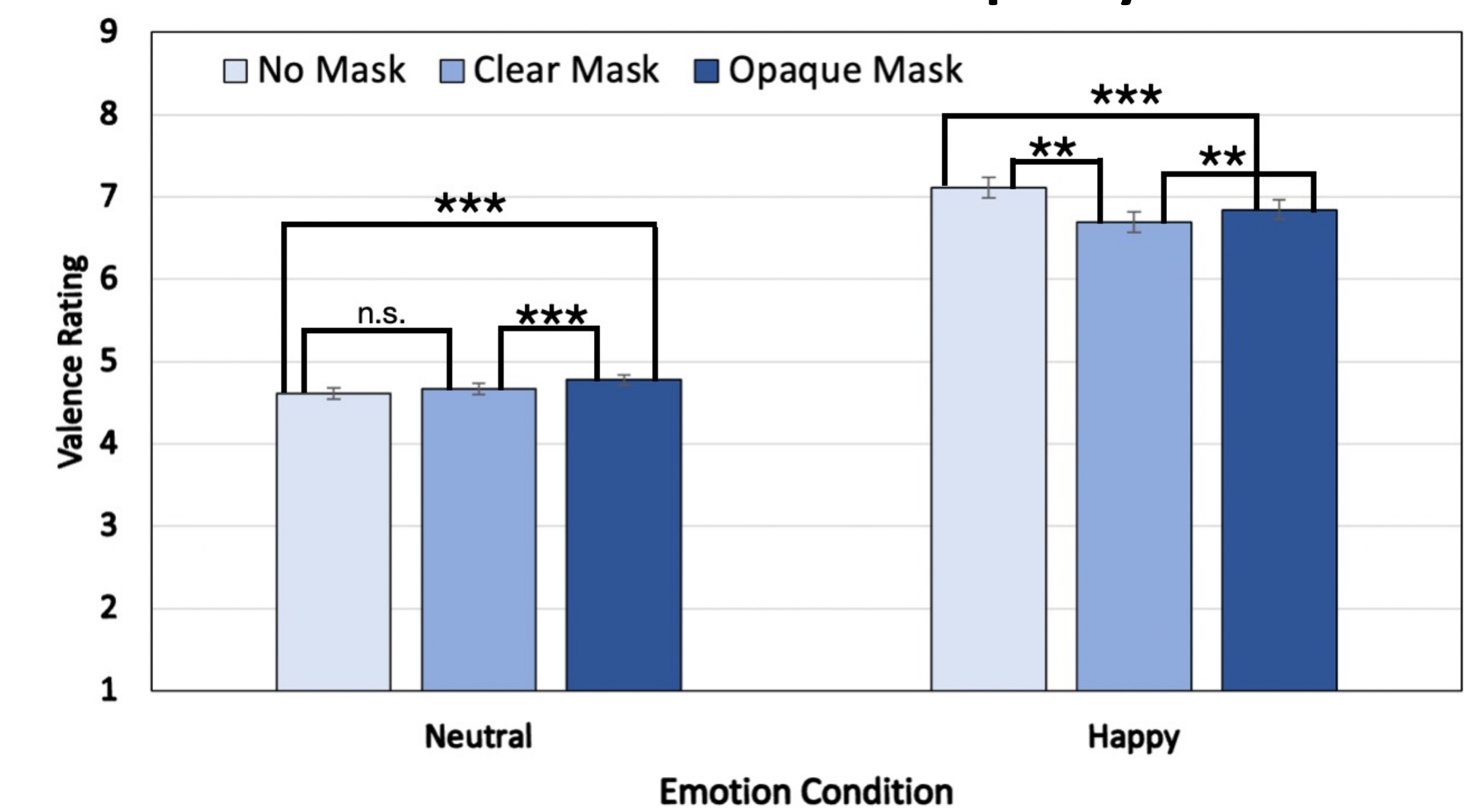
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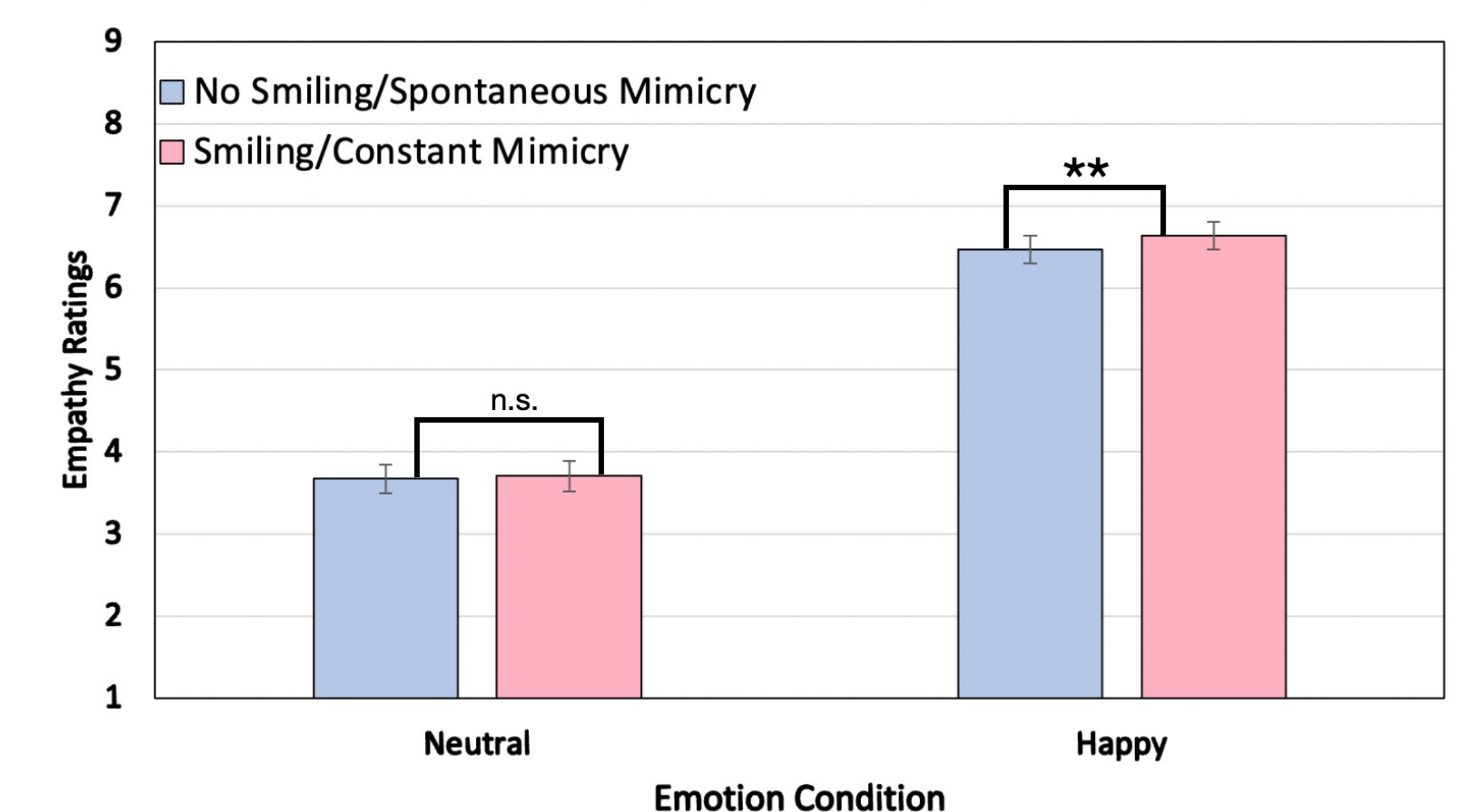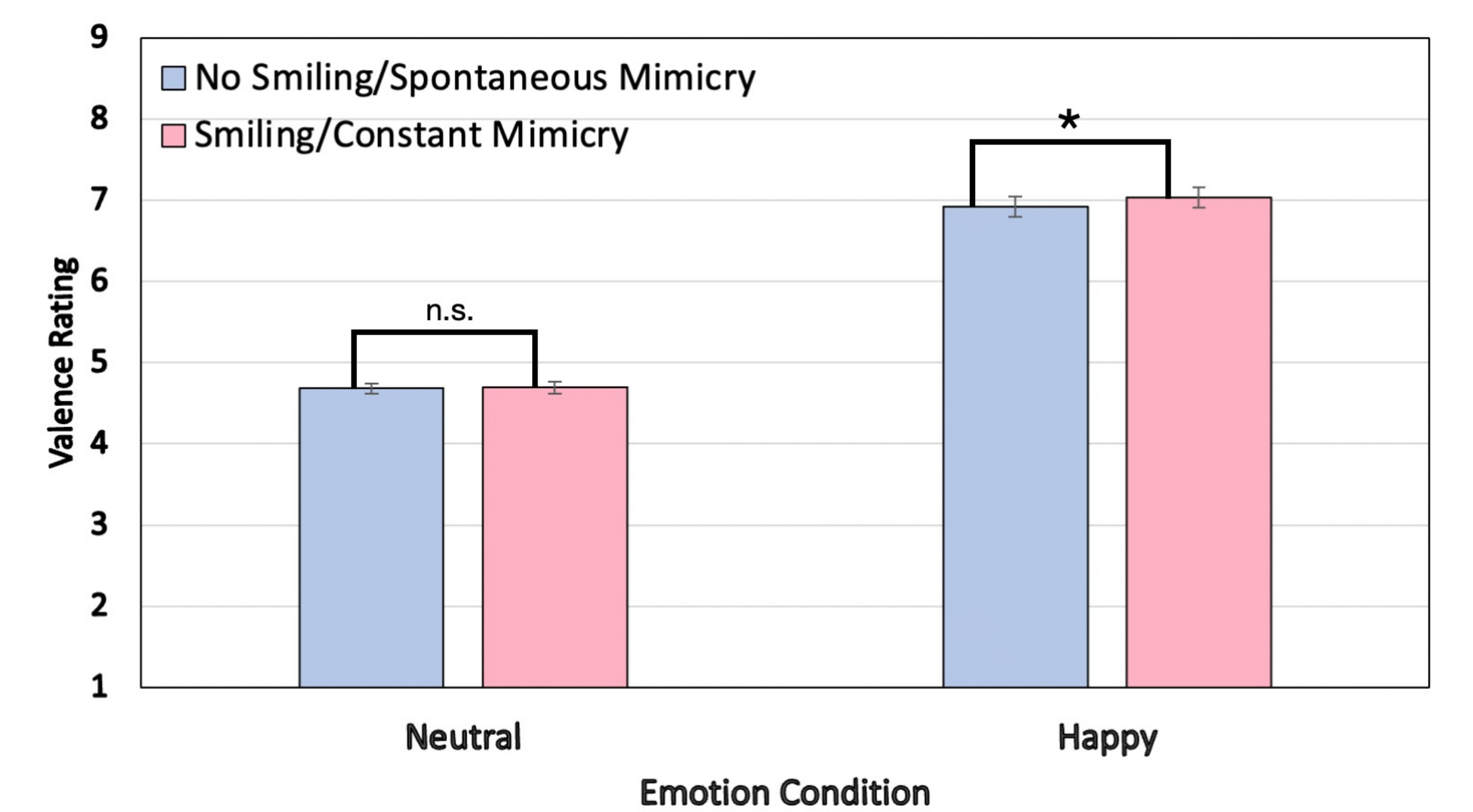
METHODS

N=69

Mimicry Does Not Counter the Effect of Masks on Empathy

RESULTS

Face Masks Reduce Empathy

Mimicry Enhances Empathy