

# Positive Emotions Across Races

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## The vision

Emotional well-being across diverse racial and socioeconomic groups is critical to understand and analyze broader patterns of social inequality. This study examines how expressions of positive emotions vary across racial and demographic lines, drawing on data from the North Texas Quality of Life survey. Using logistic regression analysis, the research explores associations between race, income, education, employment status, and the likelihood of reporting specific emotional experiences. These results underscore emotions as socially structured phenomena, shaped not only by individual circumstances but by collective identity, systemic inequality, and cultural context. The study advances a relational framework for emotional well-being, urging scholars to address affective inequality through structural and cultural lenses.

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# Emotions

- Emotions are influenced by social, cultural, and contextual factors that shape how people process and respond to both personal and collective events.
- Can reveal important insights into how different communities experience joy, anxiety, anger, and connection.
- Recent research exploring these dynamics through both individual and community lenses, the need to consider emotional experiences as multi-dimensional and deeply rooted in context
- Few studies bridge individual and collective emotional dynamics.
- This study aims to understand how race and ethnicity are associated with emotional expressions about life and community among residents of the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area.
- How do racial and ethnic groups differ in their expressions of positive, negative, and neutral emotions regarding their life and community? We also examine how these emotional expressions vary when controlling for key demographic factors such as age, gender, education, income, and employment status.
- By analyzing differences across demographic groups, this research aims to contribute to broader discussions about community well-being, emotional inequality, and the ways in which social position shapes individuals' emotional experiences.

## Socioeconomic Status

Positive emotions are often linked with subjective happiness and wellbeing (Mahadea, 2014). Emotions are reliable indicators of subjective well-being and can foster personal growth, optimism, and self-actualization.

People who report high subjective well-being are found to be more satisfied with their life outcomes and can experience positive emotions and infrequent negative emotions

Wilkins and Pace (2014) that individuals in lower socioeconomic positions encounter more chronic stressors while possessing fewer coping mechanisms, and less supportive emotional networks

## Community and Individual Emotions

“collective consciousness” shapes human experiences within community emotions (Durkheim, 1912). Offers insight into the psychosocial impacts of rituals, protests, and communal gathering. Durkheim proposed that collective effervescence is a process of emotional synchronization and intensity among individuals during collective rituals, which transforms individual consciousness into community consciousness.

through rituals, gatherings, or shared beliefs, a society creates a collective consciousness that amplifies individual emotions into something greater. shared group mind or emotional entity formed by collective thought, which can powerfully shape the emotional climate within a community.

## Relationship of Community and Emotions

Marzana et. al, (2021) analyzed individual narratives of collecting emotions and moods related to individual well-being during COVID-19. Community psychology emphasizes interactions and actions for promoting social change, highlighting the mutual influence and dependence between individuals and their living contexts. The study expands the focus from individual emotional dimensions to community dimensions, emphasizing feelings, actions, and participation within relational and community context. The study found that while emotions were the same, they were expressed towards different objects, leading to changes in collection behaviors of emotional sharing, connectedness, and participation.

Senft et. al. (2021): cultural models of emotions across Latino, Asian and European heritage shaped by broader values of individualism and collectivism

## Socially Constructed, Context-Dependent

Across studies, emotions such as joy, anger, anxiety, and solidarity are shown to be shaped by cultural norms, social structures, and collective practices, alongside individual experiences. Personal emotions often mirror broader collective emotional climates, influenced by shared rituals, group identities and institutional forces.. Theories like collective effervescence, emotional contagion, and emotional energy illustrate how shared emotional experiences can build empowerment, community, and joy even in adverse conditions. These findings suggest that emotions are not isolated feelings but reflect deeper social realities.

# Dataset from North Texas Quality of Life Data

3,166 people in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan with ages ranging from 18 to 70 and older. It encompassed five survey areas, four counties and 206 zip codes. The counties are Collin, Dallas, Denton, and Tarrant.

The survey is designed to understand public perception of North Texas on topics such as community issues, government performance, their ideology, their views on their outlook, politics and religion, public safety and feelings on community and neighborhood.

## Variables

Independent Variable: Race and Ethnicity

- Race and Ethnicity is categorized by Asian, Black, or African American, Hispanic, or Latino/a/x, White-Non-Hispanic or Other. We used age, gender, education, income, and employment status as control variables.

Dependent Variable: Positive Emotions

## Dummy Control Variables

### Education

Highest Level of education attained

There are five categories with the dummy variable: Less than High School, High school, Some college/Community College, University Graduate (B.A./B.S.) and Graduate School. The categories of “some college” and “community college” were combined to create five categories instead of six. The reference group for this variable is university graduate.

### Age/Gender

18-29, 30-44, 45-54, 55-69, and 70 and Up.  
male, female, non-binary or other

Gender had four categories, and the reference group was male.

### Income

the U.S. Census data to obtain the median income for the four counties. Collin county has a median income of \$117,588, Denton county has a median income of \$108,185, Tarrant county has a median income of \$81,905 and Dallas county has a median income of \$74,149. Poverty threshold correspond to “less than \$29,999” poverty for less than \$29,999, Lower-middle income for \$30,000 to \$63,999, Median income for \$64,000-149,999, Upper-middle for \$150,000 - \$199,999 and Affluent income for anything higher than \$200,000. The reference group for income is affluent income.

### Employment Status

There are six categories: College student/Full-time student, employed part-time, employed full-time, homemaker full-time, retired, and unemployed. The reference group is employed full-time.



# Positive Emotions:

The North Texas Quality of Life survey asks participants to answer the question in relation to their current feelings about their community and their life. They are asked to select up to three words from a list: angry, happy, disgusted, hopeful, uneasy, confident, afraid, proud, no feelings, and don't know. I categorized the emotions into three sentiment groups: positive, negative, or neutral emotions. Positive emotions are happy, hopeful, confident, and proud. Negative emotions are angry, disgusted, uneasy, and afraid. Neutral emotions are no feelings and don't know.

Created three binary variables: positive, negative or neutral, where if the positive emotions were selected, the variable positive was coded as one; if negative emotions were selected, the variable negative was coded as one; and if neutral emotions were selected, the variable natural was coded as one. Each participant could have multiple emotions recorded, but these categories help us analyze overall sentiment trends in the dataset. This categorization allows us to explore how different demographic groups experience their community and life through emotional expressions.

## Life and Community Score:

For the life score and community score variables, we assigned numeric values to the selected emotions. Positive emotions were coded as +1, negative emotions were coded as -1 and neutral emotions were coded as zero. By summing these recoded values for each respondent's emotional responses, we generated the life score and community score, which reflect the overall emotional disposition of the participants towards their life and community. These scores range from -3 to 3, with higher values indicating more positive emotions and lower values indicating more negative emotions towards their life or their community

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# Models

Model 1

## Race, Age and Gender

For Asians, having positive feelings increases by a factor of 1.948 higher than Whites. Black/African American have increased positive emotions by a factor of 1.604 times compared to White, Non- Hispanics. Hispanic/Latino have increased positive emotions by a factor 1.336 times, but this is not statistically significant in the model. Females have a decrease in positive emotions by a factor of 0.74 compares to males. Age and non-binary do not hold a statistically significant effect.

Model 2

## Education and Incomes

Asians have increased odds of positive feelings compared to White by a factor of 1.95. Black have increased odds of positive feelings compared to White by a factor of 2.02. Hispanics have increased odds of positive emotions by a factor of 1.63 compared to White and this value is statistically significant. Female is still significant with a factor of 0.77 compared to males. For income, poverty, lower-middle, and median income are significant in the model. Poverty decreases the odds of positive emotions by a factor of 0.51 compared to affluent income. Lower-middle income decreases the odds of positive emotions by a factor of 0.64 compared to affluent income. Median income decreases the odds of positive emotions by a factor of 0.64 compared to affluent income.

Model 3

## Employment Status

Asians have increased odds of positive feelings compared to White by a factor of 1.96. Black have increased odds of positive feelings compared to White by a factor of 2.06. Hispanics have increased odds of positive emotions by a factor of 1.64 compared to White.. Positive emotions decrease for females by a factor of 0.76 compared to males. Poverty, Lower-Middle and Middle Incomes are still significant, decreasing odds of positive emotions. Employment status and Education are not significant. Age is not significant and females are still significant.

## Models

# 1

Positive Emotions against  
Race, Age and Gender

Logistic regression Number of obs = 2,859

LR chi2(8) = 27.42 Prob > chi2 = 0.0006

Log likelihood = -1035.1707

Pseudo R2 = 0.0131

Asian | 1.948454 0.042

Black | 1.603768 0.022

Hispanic | 1.336444 0.070

agegroup\_numeric | .9888187 0.817

female\_dummy | .7439102 0.016

nonbinary\_dummy | .4529328 0.167

# 2

Positive Emotions Against  
Race, age, gender,  
education and Income

Logistic regression

Number of obs = 2,859 LR chi2(16) = 56.04  
Prob > chi2 = 0.0000 Log likelihood =  
-1020.858 Pseudo R2 = 0.0267

Asian | 1.946436 0.044

Black | 2.019212 0.001

Hispanic | 1.628256 0.004  
female\_dummy | .7685567 0.033  
nonbinary\_d~y | .4460813 0.166

Less than .. | .6699259 0.208

High school | .7944011 0.216

Some colle.. | .8918282 0.477

Graduate s.. | 1.042295 0.815

Poverty | .5051583 0.001

Lower-Middle | .6414138 0.014

Median | .6409017 0.012

Upper Middle | 1.239562 0.453

# 3

Positive Emotions Against  
Race, Gender, Education,  
Income and Employment  
Status

Logistic regression Number of obs = 2,859 LR  
chi2(21) = 59.02 Prob > chi2 = 0.0000 Log likelihood =  
-1019.3671 Pseudo R2 = 0.0281

Asian | 1.956116 0.043 Black | 2.062021 0.001

Hispanic | 1.635457 0.003

female\_dummy | .7625957 0.032 nonbinary\_d~y |  
.4244537 0.144

Less than .. | .6846359 0.240 High school | .7935835  
0.221 Some colle.. | .8875704 0.462 Graduate s.. | 1.037986  
0.834

Poverty | .4815885 0.001 Lower-Middle | .6156882  
0.008 Median | .6205868 0.008 Upper Middle | 1.238291  
0.456

College or.. | 1.048188 0.890 Employed p.. | 1.183768  
0.404

Homemaker.. | 1.099734 0.707 Retired | 1.346349 0.129  
Unemployed | .9714631 0.884

- Asian and Black individuals consistently show significantly higher odds of expressing positive emotions compared to White, non-Hispanic individuals, even after controlling for education, income, and employment status.
- Hispanic individuals also exhibit higher odds of reporting positive sentiments, but this association becomes statistically significant after adjusting for education and income, suggesting that these social positions mediate emotional expression is stratified and shaped by cultural racialized emotion norms, and opposes assumptions that positive emotions are purely individual.
  - The persistent association of race with positivity, even after adjusting for socioeconomic status and education, suggests that cultural norms and emotional resilience may play a significant role in how joy is experienced and expressed. Durkheim's (1912) theory of collective effervescence provides a useful framework for understanding these emotional dynamics, where collective experiences can amplify individual joy and solidarity within communities. These processes are more prevalent in collectivism communities or marginalized communities, where shared experiences and cultural cohesion serves as powerful emotional connection. This can suggest that emotional well-being is not just an individual outcome, but deeply embedded in social and cultural systems.

- Income shows a consistent and significant association with positive sentiments, where individuals in poverty, lower-middle- or median-income brackets are significantly less likely to report positive emotions compared to those in affluent income brackets.
  - This reinforces the idea that economic security is intricately linked to emotional well-being, furthering the idea from earlier research on socio-economic status and life satisfaction. Bourdieu (1984) states that income can be interpreted as a form of economic capital that provides access to both material stability and emotional security. In this sense, the emotional experience of positive emotions is unequally distributed, shaped not only by individual temperament but also by access to resources and structural opportunity.
- In all the models, women are significantly less likely to report positive emotions than men. These findings align with The World Happiness Report (Helliwell, et. al., 2024), which explains that women experience more negative emotions than males.
  - Hochschild's (1983) theory of emotional labor states that women are more likely to manage and regulate both their own emotions and the emotions of others in professional and personal settings. This emotional regulation may shape not only how women experience emotions like joy but also how they report them in surveys, contributing to a gender gap in measured emotional well-being.

- The analysis reveals that education level has no statistically significant effect on the likelihood of reporting positive emotions, which contrasts with the common portrayal that associate higher education with greater well-being. This finding aligns with Reay's (2000) concept of "emotional capital", which demonstrates how the emotional benefits of education are contingent on class position. Hochschild's perspective, this may reflect the role of institutional and workplace "feeling rules" that govern how individuals express and manage emotions in professional settings, regardless of their level of education. Similarly, employment status shows no significant association with positive emotions, suggesting that being employed may not mitigate the emotional demands or constraints individuals face in their work environments.
- These finding challenges deficit models that frame racialized communities as emotionally disadvantaged, instead suggesting that cultural resilience (Senft et al., 2021) and collective effervescence (Durkheim, 1912; Pizarro et al., 2022) may foster unique forms of positive emotions despite structural inequality. Recent work by Pizarro et al. (2022) on collective emotional experiences provides further support for this interpretation, showing how marginalized communities often develop unique emotional resources through collective practices and solidarity networks.

# Thank you!

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