

Positive Emotions Across Races

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Intro and Objectives

Study Purpose

This study examines how expressions of positive emotions vary across racial and demographic lines using North Texas Quality of Life survey data and logistic regression analysis to explore emotional well-being patterns.

Research Question	Community Focus	Analytical Approach
How do racial and ethnic groups differ in expressions of positive emotions regarding life and community in Dallas-Fort Worth area?	Analyzing emotional experiences through individual and community lenses considering demographic factors like age, gender, education, and income.	Using logistic regression to understand associations between race, socioeconomic factors, and likelihood of reporting positive emotional experiences.

Emotions as Social Phenomena

Emotions are influenced by social, cultural, and contextual factors that shape how people process and respond to both personal and collective events, revealing insights into community experiences.

Research Gaps

- Few studies bridge individual and collective emotional dynamics effectively
- Limited research on racial differences in emotional expressions
- Need for multi-dimensional context-rooted emotional analysis

Study Contributions

- Explores community well-being and emotional inequality patterns
- Examines how social position shapes individual emotional experiences

Individual Level

Personal emotional responses shaped by life circumstances.

Community Level

Collective emotional climate influences individual experiences.

Structural Level

Systemic inequality affects emotional well-being patterns.

Socioeconomic Status

Economic position influences emotional experiences.

- Positive emotions linked with subjective happiness
- Lower SES encounters more chronic stressors
- Fewer coping mechanisms in disadvantaged groups

Community and Individual Emotions

Community interactions shape individual emotional responses.

- Shared rituals amplify individual emotions
- Collective consciousness shapes human experiences
- Cultural models vary across ethnic groups

Relationship of Community and Emotions

Community psychology emphasizes interactions and actions for promoting social change, highlighting the mutual influence and dependence between individuals and their living contexts. Expands the focus from individual emotional dimensions to community dimensions, emphasizing feelings, actions, and participation within relational and community context. Emotions can be the same, but 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

Cultural norms and social structures influence emotions.

- Emotions shaped by cultural norms
- Personal emotions mirror collective climates
- 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.
- 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:

Asked to select up to three words from a list: angry, happy, disgusted, hopeful, uneasy, confident, afraid, proud, no feelings, and don't know.

Categories: 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

- 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;
- if neutral emotions were selected the variable natural was coded as zero.

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:

Assigned numeric values to the selected emotions.

- Positive emotions were coded as +1
- negative emotions were coded as -1
- 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

Models

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Model 1: Demographics

Race, age, and gender analysis showing Asian and Black increased positive emotions compared to White participants.

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Model 2: Socioeconomic Factors

Added education and income controls, revealing income's significant impact on positive emotional expressions.

3

Model 3: Employment Status

Full model including employment variables, showing persistent racial differences independent of work status.

Consistent Racial Patterns

Asian and Black individuals show significantly higher odds of positive emotions across all models compared to White participants.

Racial differences remain significant even after controlling for socioeconomic status, education, and employment factors.

Key Socioeconomic Findings

Income shows consistent and significant association with positive sentiments. Individuals in poverty, lower-middle, or median-income brackets are significantly less likely to report positive emotions compared to affluent income brackets, reinforcing economic security's link to emotional well-being.

- 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.



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 - 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. Collective experiences can amplify individual joy and solidarity within communities.
 - Prevalent in collectivism communities or marginalized communities, where shared experiences and cultural cohesion serves as powerful emotional connection. Emotional well-being is not just an individual outcome, but deeply embedded in social and cultural systems.

- Income's significant association with positive sentiments:
 - Economic security is intricately linked to emotional well-being. Bourdieu (1984) states that income can be interpreted as a form of economic capital that provides access to both material stability and emotional security. Emotional experience of positive emotions is unequally distributed, shaped by individual temperament and by access to resources and structural opportunity.



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- 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. Emotional regulation may shape how women experience emotions like joy and how they report them in surveys, contributing to a gender gap in measured emotional well-being.

Education and Employment

- Education level has no statistically significant effect on the likelihood of reporting positive emotions.
 - Contrasts with the common portrayal that associate higher education with greater well-being. Reay's (2000) concept of "emotional capital" demonstrates how the emotional benefits of education are contingent on class position. Hochschild's perspective 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.
- 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.

This research opposes assumptions that positive emotions are purely individual, demonstrating how cultural norms and emotional resilience can play a role in emotional expression.

- Racialized communities show higher positive emotion odds despite structural challenges with cultural cohesion serves as powerful emotional connection in marginalized communities
- Emotional well-being can be deeply embedded in social and cultural systems rather than individual outcomes
- 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.

Primary Research Contributions

This study reveals that expressions of positive emotions vary significantly across racial lines, with Asian and Black individuals showing higher odds of positive emotions even after controlling for socioeconomic factors.

Racial Differences

- Asian individuals: 1.96x higher odds of positive emotions
- Black individuals: 2.06x higher odds of positive emotions
- Hispanic individuals: 1.64x higher odds (significant with controls)

Socioeconomic Patterns

- Income significantly affects emotional well-being across all levels
- Gender disparities persist with women reporting fewer positive emotions
- Education and employment show no significant independent effects

Theoretical Advance

Emotions as socially structured phenomena requiring structural analysis.

Cultural Framework

Community resilience and collective practices foster positive emotions.

Thank you!

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