



# Positive Emotions Across Race

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- Master student in Social Data Analytics and Research. I will graduate in December 2025.

## Intro and Objectives

### Study Purpose

How expressions of positive emotions vary across racial and demographic lines

Using The North Texas Quality of Life survey data

#### Research Question

How do racial and ethnic groups differ in expressions of positive emotions regarding life and community in Dallas-Fort Worth area?

#### Community Focus

Emotional experiences through individual and community lenses considering demographic factors like age, gender, education, and income.

#### Analytical Approach

Logistic regression to understand likelihood of reporting positive emotional experiences.

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## Emotions

- 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.
- Personal emotional responses shaped by life circumstances
- Collective emotional climate influences individual experiences
- Systemic inequality affects emotional well-being patterns.

## 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

## 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

## Relationship of Community and Emotions

- Community dimensions emphasize 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.
- Cultural models of emotions shape broader values of individualism and collectivism

## 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

## 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

- Five categories with the dummy variable
- “some college” and “community college” were combined to create five categories.
- 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

- U.S. Census data to obtain the median income for the four counties.
- Survey asked for ranges of income, corresponded levels of poverty, and median income were used to label the income variable.
- 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 neural emotions were selected the variable natural was coded as zero.

## 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.
- Summed the score summing to create the life score and community score,
- reflects the overall emotional disposition of the participants towards their life and community. These scores range from -3 to 3



# 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.

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## 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 exhibit higher odds of reporting positive sentiments
  - Association becomes statistically significant after adjusting for education and income
  - 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 becomes statistically significant after adjusting for education and income
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- Cultural norms and emotional resilience may play a significant role in how joy is experienced and expressed.
- Collective experiences can amplify individual joy and solidarity within communities – Durkheim's (1912) theory of collective effervescence

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



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  - Emotional experience of positive emotions is unequally distributed, shaped by individual temperament and by access to resources and structural opportunity.
- Women are significantly less likely to report positive emotions than men.
  - The World Happiness Report (Helliwell, et. al., 2024) reports that women experience more negative emotions than males.
  - 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.
  - Emotional benefits of education could be contingent on class position.(Reay's (2000) concept of "emotional capital")
- 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.

Cultural norms and emotional resilience can play a role in emotional expression

- 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) may foster unique forms of positive emotions despite structural inequality.
  - Pizarro et al. (2022) explains that marginalized communities often develop unique emotional resources through collective practices and solidarity networks.

# Thank you!

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