Authentic and hubristic pride: Differential relations to aspects of goal regulation, affect, and self-control

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Abstract

This study examines the relationships of trait-like tendencies towards authentic and hubristic pride (Tracy & Robins, 2004) with goal-regulation tendencies, affective tendencies, and impulsive traits. Undergraduates (n = 936) completed the 14-item measure of authentic and hubristic pride (Tracy & Robins, 2007b) and a battery of other self-report measures. The two types of pride correlated with distinct profiles of goal-regulation tendencies, affective tendencies, and self-control. Authentic pride correlated with measures of self-control, whereas hubristic pride was related to measures of impulsivity and aggression. Overall, the differential pattern of correlations fits with a model in which authentic pride is tied to adaptive achievement and goal engagement, whereas hubristic pride is tied to extrinsic values of public recognition and social dominance.

1. Introduction

A developing literature has begun to examine the experience of pride and to describe many ways in which such experiences shape self-regulatory functioning (Grant & Higgins, 2003; Pekrun, Elliot, & Maier, 2006, 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002) and interpersonal functioning (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004; Leary, 2007; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995; Williams & DeSteno, 2009). Like shame, pride is termed a self-conscious emotion: an emotional reaction to the self (Izard, Ackerman, & Schultz, 1999; Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2007a, 2007b). Thus, whereas people experience joy (a non-self-conscious emotion) when good things happen that do not reflect particularly on the self, they may experience pride (a self-conscious emotion) when they become aware that they have lived up to some ideal self-representation. As do other self-conscious emotions, pride requires self-awareness and self-evaluation (Tracy & Robins, 2004). Recent studies point a role for pride in guiding achievement (Pekrun et al., 2006) and particularly in providing motivation for goal exertion when external immediate rewards are not available (Williams & DeSteno, 2006; Williams & DeSteno, 2009), but also with a variety of adverse social consequences (Freud & Horney, cited in Gershman, 1947; McGregor, Nail, Marigold, & Kang, 2005). To help resolve these seemingly paradoxical effects of pride, several people have suggested the importance of distinguishing hubristic from authentic pride (Ekman, 2003; Lewis, 2000; Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1989; Tracy & Robins, 2004). Authentic pride has been characterized by words such as “accomplished” and “confident,” whereas hubristic pride has been characterized by words such as “arrogant” and “conceited.”

Tracy and Robins (2007b) provided evidence of the semantic separability of these two sorts of pride, and of the differential associations these two sorts of pride have with aspects of personality. In their view (Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2007a), authentic pride derives from specific accomplishments or goal attainments, and is often focused on the efforts made towards that goal. Hubristic pride, on the other hand, is related instead to more global beliefs about abilities and strengths, as reflected in statements such as “I do everything well” or “I am naturally talented” (Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2007a). Put differently, in this view authentic pride arises from a self-evaluation of “doing” whereas hubristic pride arises from a self-evaluation of “being” (Lewis, 2000; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992). Hubristic pride appears to be relatively defensive (McGregor et al., 2005) and neurotic in nature (Gershman, 1947; Tracy & Robins, 2004).

The study reported here extends the research on trait-like tendencies towards authentic and hubristic pride to examine their differential relationships with constructs in several domains, including goal-regulation tendencies, affective tendencies other
than pride, and impulsivity-related traits and behavior. We focus here on trait pride, defined as long-term tendencies to experience pride more intensely or frequently (Tracy, Shariff, & Cheng, 2010).

1.2. Pride and goal regulation

Researchers have documented strong relationships between tendencies towards pride (both trait and state) and aspects of goal regulation (Cosmides & Tooby, 2000; Covington & Omelich, 1984; Gruber & Johnson, 2009; Higgins et al., 2001; LeDoux, 1996; Williams & DeSteno, 2008). Trait pride has been shown to be a robust predictor of achieving goals related to mastery (Pekrun et al., 2006, 2009; Williams & DeSteno, 2008, 2009) and competence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

The nature of one’s goals, however, appears to differ by the type of pride assessed. Tracy and her colleagues (2004, 2010) argued that authentic pride, but not hubristic pride, is linked to achievement, accomplishment, confidence, productivity, and self-worth (Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2007a, 2007b). This suggests an approach to life in which intrinsic involvement guides behavior. If so, tendencies toward authentic pride should also be related to higher levels of traits such as valuing the activities that make up one’s life and taking up new goals when previous goal-directed efforts prove not to be successful.

In contrast, there is indirect evidence suggesting a link between hubristic pride and the pursuit of goals so as to attain acknowledgment from others. That is, hubristic pride has been linked to a hierarchical dominance orientation, in which status depends on social validation (Cheng, Tracy, & Henrich, 2010); that dominance orientation, in turn, has been related to extrinsic goal pursuit (Duriez, Vansteenkiste, Soenens, & De Witte, 2007). Given such an approach to goals, we hypothesize that hubristic pride will also relate to the tendency to set unrealistically ambitious extrinsically-motivated goals. Because goal pursuit has the purpose of obtaining others’ acknowledgment, and because self-esteem based on such considerations is fragile, we hypothesize that persons high in hubristic pride will tend to overgeneralize from both successes and failures. Success will be taken to mean “the sky is the limit,” particularly with regard to social standing; failure will be taken to mean disaster. Such a pattern would be consistent with the connection between hubristic pride and the tendency to make global attributions for success (Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2007a, 2007b).

1.3. Pride, other emotions, and sensitivity to reward and punishment

Pride is a positively-valenced emotion. Not surprisingly, then, several researchers have documented that tendencies toward pride (both authentic and hubristic) are related to positive affect (Gruber & Johnson, 2009), and particularly to self-esteem and pleasure after achievement (Takahashi et al., 2007). It is a straightforward extrapolation to suggest that pride should be related to elevated levels of dispositional reward sensitivity. Because both aspects of pride relate to attainments (though, we believe, for different reasons), it also seems reasonable to suggest that both should relate to tendencies to expend strong effort toward goal pursuit.

Several aspects of hubristic pride would be expected to relate to tendencies towards certain kinds of negative affect. To the extent that a driving mechanism in trait-like hubristic pride is related to a need for extrinsic recognition of successes, failure should generate anger, hostility, and aggressive behavior among those prone to hubristic pride (Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2007b). Any association of hubristic pride with tendencies to set unrealistically high goals (as suggested earlier) would exacerbate such negative mood states. Indeed, recent findings indicate that hubristic pride relates to higher levels of aggression, whereas authentic pride relates to lower levels of aggression (Cheng et al., 2010; Tracy, Cheng, Robins, & Trzesniewski, 2009).

1.4. Pride and self-control

Authentic pride, as a core self-conscious emotion (Heckhausen, 1987), is believed to motivate people to persevere in the absence of extrinsic incentives (Williams & DeSteno, 2008) and to foster the pursuit of altruistic (Cheng et al., 2010) and valued goal-relevant behavior. As such, the pursuit of core authentic goals should also promote self-control (Silvia & O’Brien, 2004). Consistent with this idea, authentic pride has been found to correlate with high levels of conscientiousness, whereas hubristic pride has been found to relate to low levels of conscientiousness, as well as to higher levels of antisocial behavior (Cheng et al., 2010; Tracy & Robins, 2007c).

In the study reported here we tested more broadly idea that authentic pride would relate to conscientiousness and to related constructs. Scales were included that assess general self-control, attentional control, the sense of urgency that can arise in response to both positive and negative emotions, and behavioral perseverance. We also included a measure of alcohol use, given that alcohol use is often viewed as an indicator of poor self-control (Werch & Gorman, 1988; Young & Pihl, 1980).

1.5. Summary

Trait-like tendencies towards hubristic and authentic pride have been differentiated, and these two facets of pride have been found to relate differently to such variables as self-esteem, narcissism, aggression, and social functioning. Here we expand upon these findings to consider how the two facets of pride will relate to a broader set of trait-like tendencies. As outlined in the preceding paragraphs, we focus on several aspects of goal regulation, tendencies to experience negative affect and positive affects other than pride, sensitivity to incentives and threat, and self-control versus impulsivity. We hypothesize that authentic and hubristic pride will both relate to greater positive affectivity and higher levels of behavioral approach tendencies. Hubristic pride, but not authentic pride, is expected to relate to setting unrealistic extrinsic ambitions, reacting unrealistically to small successes, and displaying anger and negative affect in the context of failures. Authentic pride is expected to be related to greater self-control, whereas hubristic pride is expected to be related to diminished self-control.

2. Methods

Undergraduates at the University of Miami (N = 936, 42% male), completed questionnaires in group sessions. The sample came from a pool that ranged from 18 to 21, was approximately 55% non-Hispanic White, 23% Hispanic, 8% Asian, 6% African American, and 7% other. Because participants did not all complete all measures, Ns vary.

2.1. Measures

2.1.1. Pride

The authentic and hubristic pride scales (Tracy & Robins, 2007b) comprise adjectives and phrases reflecting authentic pride (seven items, e.g., “like I am achieving,” “fulfilled,” “productive”) and reflecting hubristic pride (seven items, “arrogant,” “conceited,” “pompous,” “smug”). Respondents indicate the extent to which each item represents them, on a five-point scale. Both scales had high internal consistency in this sample, alphas = .89 for authentic and .85 for hubristic. The two scales were unrelated, r (934) = .06.
2.1.3. The life engagement test (LET)

The LET (Scheier et al., 2006) assesses the sense of purpose in life: the extent to which a person's life includes valued activities (six items, e.g., “I value my activities a lot”). This measure has been shown to have adequate psychometric properties (see Scheier et al., 2006). Respondents indicated their agreement on a five-point scale. (Alphas for these and the remaining measures are in Table 1.)

2.1.4. Goal adjustment scale (GAS)

Responses to lost goals were measured by the GAS (Wrosch et al., 2003). It has two subscales: Goal disengagement (six items, e.g., “It's easy for me to stop thinking about the goal and let it go”), and goal re-engagement (four items, e.g., “I seek other meaningful goals”). Goal disengagement from unattainable goals has been shown to be associated with lower levels of self-reported health problems, depressive symptoms, perceived stress, and more normative diurnal cortisol secretion (Wrosch et al., 2007). Goal re-engagement has been shown to be related to well-being (Neely et al., 2009). Responses were made on a five-point scale. This measure also went only to the subsample of 149.

2.1.5. Affective intensity measure (AIM)

The AIM (Larsen & Diener, 1987) assesses the intensity with which a person experiences emotions in daily life. We used an

Table 1
Correlations of authentic and hubristic pride with other trait scales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Alpha (N)</th>
<th>Correlation with authentic pride</th>
<th>Correlation with Hubristic pride</th>
<th>t for difference in correlations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measures reflecting incentive and threat sensitivity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BAS reward responsiveness</td>
<td>.71 (805)</td>
<td>.21***</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>4.06***</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAS drive</td>
<td>.76 (804)</td>
<td>.27***</td>
<td>.21***</td>
<td>1.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAS fun seeking</td>
<td>.71 (805)</td>
<td>.08***</td>
<td>.14***</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIS threat sensitivity</td>
<td>.77 (805)</td>
<td>-.15***</td>
<td>-.14***</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures of affect intensity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIM positive</td>
<td>.68 (804)</td>
<td>.25***</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>4.24***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIM negative</td>
<td>.76 (805)</td>
<td>-.10***</td>
<td>-.08***</td>
<td>-.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measures of goal engagement</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life engagement test</td>
<td>.85 (149)</td>
<td>.51***</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>6.35***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal disengagement</td>
<td>.77 (149)</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal re-engagement</td>
<td>.89 (149)</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>4.33***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures of extrinsic goal-setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASSUP popular fame</td>
<td>.89 (935)</td>
<td>.12***</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASSUP financial success</td>
<td>.78 (936)</td>
<td>.12***</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td>2.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measures of positive and negative generalization: responses to success and failure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive generalization: social</td>
<td>.82 (656)</td>
<td>.12***</td>
<td>.37***</td>
<td>-4.84***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive generalization: lateral</td>
<td>.82 (857)</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>1.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive generalization: upward</td>
<td>.82 (656)</td>
<td>.14***</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>-3.05**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative generalization</td>
<td>.82 (805)</td>
<td>-.37***</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td>Measures reflecting hostility, anger, and aggression</td>
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<td>AQ hostility</td>
<td>.66 (801)</td>
<td>-.27***</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-7.41***</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQ anger</td>
<td>.67 (805)</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.28***</td>
<td>8.67***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQ Verbal Aggression</td>
<td>.75 (803)</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>-7.65***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQ Physical Aggression</td>
<td>.75 (805)</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>-7.30***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFI-Agreeableness</td>
<td>.80 (149)</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.35***</td>
<td>5.16***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measures reflecting self-control and impulsivity</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BFI-conscientiousness</td>
<td>.83 (935)</td>
<td>.48***</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>17.40***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control scale</td>
<td>.83 (935)</td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>13.29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention control scale</td>
<td>.79 (936)</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>-.11**</td>
<td>8.10**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPPS perseverance</td>
<td>.84 (934)</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>-.18**</td>
<td>14.41**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPPS urgency</td>
<td>.90 (669)</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>-8.73**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive urgency measure</td>
<td>.85 (935)</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>10.78**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUDIT</td>
<td>.85 (936)</td>
<td>-.10**</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>-6.90**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AIM = affect intensity measurement; BAS = behavioral approach system; BIS = behavioral inhibition system; WASSUP = willingly approached set of statistically unlikely pursuits; GDGRS = goal disengagement and goal re-engagement; POG = positive overgeneralization; AQ = aggression questionnaire; BFI = Big-Five Inventory; SCS = The brief self-control scale; ACS = attention control scale; UPPS = urgency premeditation–perseverance–sensation seeking; PUM = positive urgency measure; AUDIT = alcohol use disorders identification test.

.05, .01, .001.
abbreviated form (Fulford, Johnson, & Carver, 2008); items addressed positive feelings (five items, e.g., “When something good happens, I am usually much more jubilant than others”) or negative feelings (seven items, e.g., “When I feel guilty, this emotion is quite strong”). Responses used a five-point scale. Positive items correlated only .26 with negative items (Fulford et al., 2008) and were analyzed separately.

2.1.6. Willingly approached set of statistically unlikely pursuits (WASSUP)

The WASSUP (Johnson & Carver, 2006; Johnson, Eisner, & Carver, 2009) assesses the tendency to set implausibly high goals. We used only the subscales of popular fame (seven items, e.g., “You will be famous”) and financial success (four items, e.g., “You will run a Fortune 500 company”). Participants were asked to rate the probability that they would set each goal for themselves on a four-point scale.

2.1.7. Positive overgeneralization (POG)

The POG (Eisner, Johnson, & Carver, 2008) measures three tendencies to overgeneralize from success: social generalization (five items, e.g., “When an attractive person smiles at me, I can tell it means s/he is hot for me”), lateral generalization (six items, e.g., “When I succeed at something, it makes me think about successes in other areas of my life”), and upward generalization (five items, e.g., “If someone praises the way I express something, it makes me think of writing a book.”). Agreement with each statement was rated on a four-point scale.

2.1.8. Negative generalization

Negative generalization (four items, e.g., “If I notice one fault of mine, it makes me think about my other faults”) is one scale of a larger measure intended to assess dysfunctional self-regulatory cognitive tendencies. Negative generalization is related both to depression and to depression vulnerability (Carver, La Voie, Kuhl, & Ganellen, 1988). Respondents indicated agreement on a four-point scale.

2.1.9. Aggression questionnaire short form (AQ-SF)

The AQ (Buss & Perry, 1992) measures trait aggression and anger. Bryant and Smith (2001) shortened it, reducing overlap among four subscales: anger (three items, e.g., “I have trouble controlling my temper”), Hostility (three items, e.g., “I wonder why I am so bitter about things”), Verbal Aggression (three items, e.g., “I often find myself disagreeing with people”), and Physical Aggression (three items, e.g., “I have threatened people I know”). The AQ-SF subscales have been found to correlate well with vignette measures of anger, Hostility, Verbal Aggression, Physical Aggression, and with measures of emotional instability and alcohol consumption (Tremlay & Ewart, 2005). Ratings were made on a five-point scale. As noted earlier, the two aspects of pride have previously been found to correlate in opposite directions with aggression (Tracy et al., 2009).

2.1.10. Conscientiousness and Agreeableness

The Big-Five Inventory (BFI, John & Srivastava, 1999) measures the big-five personality traits. The conscientiousness scale (19 items, e.g., “I see myself as someone who does a thorough job”) was completed by the full sample; the subsample of 149 also completed the Agreeableness scale (16 items, e.g., “I see myself as someone who is generally trusting”). Previous studies have linked conscientiousness to goal-setting (Barrick & Strauss, 1993) and goal-orientation (Colquitt & Simmering, 1998). These scales have both previously been found to correlate with authentic pride (Tracy & Robins, 2007c).

2.1.11. The self-control scale (SCS)

The SCS (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004) assesses self-control (e.g., “I am good at resisting temptation”). A brief SCS (13 items), strongly associated with the full SCS ($r = .93$ and .92; Tangney et al., 2004), was used here. Respondents rated their agreement on a five-point scale.

2.1.12. The attention control scale (ACS)

The ACS (Derryberry & Reed, 2002) measures voluntary attentional control (e.g., “When I need to concentrate and solve a problem, I have trouble focusing my attention”). We used the brief version (12 items) reported by Ayduk et al. (2008). The brief ACS has been correlated with measures of borderline personality and rejection sensitivity (Ayduk et al., 2008). Respondents rated their agreement with each item on a five-point scale.


The UPPS (Whiteside & Lynam, 2001) is an inventory of impulsive tendencies that has four scales. Two of them were used here: Urgency (12 items, e.g., “I have trouble controlling my impulses”) and perseverance (10 items, e.g., “Once I start a project, I almost always finish it”). Respondents rated their agreement with the items on a five-point scale.

2.1.14. Positive urgency measure (PUM)

The PUM (Cyders et al., 2007) is a 14-item scale that assesses the tendency to respond recklessly to positive mood states (e.g., “When I am really excited, I tend not to think of the consequences of my actions”). For this study we selected the seven best-loading items. Respondents rated their agreement on a five-point scale.

2.1.15. Alcohol use disorders identification test (AUDIT)

The AUDIT (Saunders, Aasland, Babor, De La Fuente, & Grant, 1993) is a 10-item scale that screens for alcohol consumption and drinking problems (e.g., “Have you or someone else been injured as a result of your drinking?”). The AUDIT is widely used and is correlated with diagnoses of alcohol abuse and dependence (Allen, Reintert, & Volk, 2001). Each item has a separate set of responses.

3. Results

Correlations between pride scales and the other measures are in Table 1. To test whether any apparent differences between pairs of correlations involving the two types of pride were significant, comparisons between pairs of correlations for authentic and hubristic pride were made using the method of Cohen and Cohen (1983) for non-independent correlations. Table 1 reveals both similarities and differences between authentic and hubristic pride.1

With respect to measures relating to incentive motivation and positive feelings, there were clear differences in how the pride scales correlated with several measures. Only authentic pride related to Positive Affect Intensity, and only authentic pride related to reward responsiveness (energized pleasure in attaining goals). The two kinds of pride did not differ in their relations to other aspects of incentive or threat sensitivity, with both relating positively to drive and fun seeking. Only authentic pride related to life engagement (the sense of purpose in life) and goal re-engagement (the tendency to take on a new goal after a loss).

Hubristic pride related more strongly than did authentic pride to aspirations for popular fame and financial success, though both

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1 Men reported significantly higher levels of hubristic pride than women, $p < .01$; controlling for sex did not change the results appreciably.
related to such aspirations. Hubristic pride also had stronger associations with two aspects of positive generalization: social generalization and upward generalization. Interestingly, these latter two scales also imply strong upward goal adjustment after success experiences. Authentic pride related inversely to negative generalization; hubristic pride was unrelated to it.

As in previous studies (Tracy et al., 2009) there were sharp differences in associations with measures of anger, hostility, and aggression. Hubristic pride related positively to all of those tendencies. Authentic pride was inversely related to scales measuring anger and hostility, and was unrelated to aggression. Authentic pride related positively to Agreeableness (which in some ways is the reverse of aggressiveness); hubristic pride related inversely to Agreeableness.

Despite the considerable diversity among the measures of self-control and inhibition of impulses, they correlated an average of .46 with one another; their correlations with the two prides consistently diverged. Authentic pride related positively to conscientiousness, self-control, and attention control, and inversely to emotional impulsiveness. Hubristic pride also related significantly to the same measures, but in each case in the opposite direction. Finally, hubristic pride related positively to the measure of alcohol use, whereas authentic pride related inversely to it.

4. Discussion

The pattern of associations obtained in this study replicates and extends previous research on the importance of differentiating hubristic pride from authentic pride. Our findings suggest that these two tendencies have very different associations with a broad range of measures of affectivity, reward sensitivity, anger and aggression, goal regulation, and self-control. Indeed, the correlations of the two forms of pride with these various constructs differed substantially. The two forms of pride evidenced particularly different relations with measures of impulsivity, anger, and responses to failure. Findings suggest that hubristic pride and authentic pride may be driven by very different motivations and may have fundamentally different implications for goal regulation and interpersonal functioning.

We should note some of the limitations in this study. Most importantly, it used a cross-sectional design which precludes examination of causal patterns among the variables. Further, the reliance on self-report measures may have artificially inflated the overlap among constructs. Additional research, using laboratory-based measures of emotion and goal regulation are warranted, as are longitudinal studies.

4.1. Differing life experiences

Despite these limitations, our findings paint a picture of authentic pride as reflecting both sensitivity to the occurrence of rewards and the experience of positive affects more generally. People who experience authentic pride appear to enjoy life. Authentic pride was also related to measures of a sense of purpose in life, and to the tendency to respond to losses in life by moving onto new goals. All of these are adaptive and positive characteristics.

In sharp contrast to this pattern for authentic pride, none of these tendencies characterized hubristic pride. Instead, hubristic pride appears reflective of desires for extrinsic goals that lead to public recognition or even adoration (popular fame and financial success). Consistent with that, hubris is also reflected in upward generalization (generalizing from one success to higher aspirations in the same domain) and especially social generalization (generalizing from a social success to the broader domain of social influence).

Perhaps tellingly, there was one sort of generalization that related more to authentic pride than to hubristic pride. This was lateral generalization: generalization to other domains of one’s life. This pattern suggests that authentic pride is associated with a sense of self in which multiple areas of engagement in life are valued.

The pattern for hubristic pride is consistent with a focus on continual striving for a higher place in the hierarchy, a struggle that may not involve anxiety but also does not seem to result in much pleasure. According to one evolutionary view (Tracy et al., 2010), hubristic pride reflects dominance strategies (Cheng et al., 2010), which involve attempts to procure resources, with less emphasis on interpersonal connectivity. This view is also consistent with the associations between hubristic pride and measures of aggression and disagreeableness.

The differential pattern for the two types of pride regarding negative emotional experience appears, however, to be specific to this class of emotions (disagreeableness and aggressiveness). That is, both types of pride related inversely to anxiety proneness (BIS) and to the AIM index of negative emotions (the item content of which addressed mostly anxiety, guilt, and empathy with others’ distress).

A final important difference between the two types of pride pertains to their relationships with the property of self-control. On a succession of six measures that all have overtones of impulsiveness versus self-control, plus a measure of difficulties with alcohol (also taken as an indicator of low self-control), hubristic pride was related to higher levels of impulsiveness and lack of restraint. In contrast, authentic pride was related to greater self-control on all measures.

4.2. Implications

Authentic pride appears to characterize adaptive goal regulation. It may important to the management of certain kinds of pro-social behaviors: “attainment of prestige, a high status that is granted on the basis of demonstrated knowledge, skills, and altruism (i.e., respect-based status)” (Cheng et al., 2010; Tracy et al., 2010). A deeper understanding of hubristic pride may provide insight into power and status seeking behaviors that occur without consideration of interpersonal costs. Hubristic pride is also related to a web of clinically-relevant issues involving impulsivity, aggression, and potential alcohol use problems. Studying the mal-adaptive tendencies of hubristic pride may help elucidate problems related to social dominance such as narcissism (Cheng et al., 2010; Weisfeld & Wendorf, 2000), antisocial personality disorder, and psychopathy. These findings join with previous ones in highlighting the importance of attending to different facets of pride. Although pride might intuitively be considered a positive emotion, convergent findings suggest the importance of a more nuanced conceptualization of the positive and negative aspects of pride.

References


