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# Pride May Facilitate Cooperation with Agentic Though Immoral Individuals

***Abstract****: In most individualistic cultures, pride is regarded as a positive emotion that follows a positive evaluation of one's competence or effort when achieving a goal. Fredrickson (2001) suggests that pride may expand individuals' scope of attention and broaden their action repertoires by driving them toward greater achievements in the future. In the present study, we show that proud individuals may search for greater achievements by stronger willingness to cooperate with agentic though immoral individuals. We demonstrate that proud participants in comparison to participants in the control condition rely to a higher degree on information on agency and respect, and less on information on morality and liking of their potential partners of cooperation.*

***Key words****: pride, social cognition, morality, agency, liking, respect, cooperation*

Pride is often described as a positive emotion that is experienced following a positive evaluation of one's competence or effort when achieving a goal (Weiner, 1986). For people in most European and American cultures it is a pleasant feeling associated with self-achievement, autonomy, and disengagement from others (Rodriguez Mosquera, Manstead, & Fischer, 2000). Fredrickson (2001) suggests that pride may expand individuals' scope of attention and broaden their action repertoires by driving them toward greater achievements in the future. In the present article, we show that proud individuals may search for greater achievements by cooperating with agentic immoral individuals, whom they dislike but find agentic.

## Social perception of others

Agency (competence) and morality (warmth) constitute two basic content dimensions of social cognition (e.g. Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). The dominance of agency in self-cognition and the dominance of morality in cognition of others have been shown in a variety of ways (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014). When forming impressions of others, people more frequently search for information about their morality rather than agency and more strongly rely in their impressions on the former content (Wojciszke, Bazinska, & Jaworski, 1998) and semantic categories concerning morality are more accessible than those referring to agency (Wentura, Rothermund, & Bak, 2000). Other research also confirms that person cognition seems to be dominated by moral over agentic content (Abele & Bruckmuller, 2011; De Bruin & Van Lange, 2000, Goodwin, Piazza & Rozin, 2014).

Although interpersonal attitudes are typically conceived of as unitary entities, researchers suggest two separate (though correlated) dimensions of interpersonal attitudes: liking and respect (Lydon, Jamieson, & Zanna, 1988). Perceived agency and morality influence interpersonal attitudes in different ways. Wojciszke, Abele and Baryla (2009) show that liking is more strongly influenced by moral qualities, whereas respect is more strongly influenced by agentic qualities. A theoretical model of social perception is presented with solid lines in Figure 1: Agency and morality constitute two basic dimensions of social cognition (out of which morality dominates perception of others) that influence two dimensions of interpersonal attitudes: respect and liking respectively.

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## Pride interaction with agency and morality

Self-conscious emotions, like pride, track appraisals of the individual's social rank (Tiedens, Ellsworth, & Mesquita, 2000), which is related to agency of an individual. Pride arises as a result of favourable comparisons of oneself to others (Stipek, 1998; Tracy & Robins, 2004) and co-varies with gains in status and rank relative to others (Shariff & Tracy, 2009; Tracy & Robins, 2004). The prototypical pride display involves postural expansion and a backwards head tilt (Tracy & Robins, 2007), similar to mammalian displays of dominance. Pride enhances the sense of similarity to strong others, yet diminishes the subjective similarity to weak others (Oveis, Horberg, & Keltner, 2010). Pride, therefore, can be conceived as a rank-elevating emotion resulting from appraisals of agency.

Although moral psychology develops the understanding of emotional roots of human morality (e.g. Oveis, Horberg, & Keltner, 2010), pride still seems to be under-studied in this field. Some studies imply that pride evokes inferences of heightened self-interest and lower morality. People perceived as competitive and proud are described with lower trustworthiness and warmth (Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, & Kashima, 2005). Social groups stereotyped as competitive are also stereotyped as less trustworthy, less well-intentioned, and lacking in warmth (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Individuals portrayed as highly competent and successful are presumed to have colder personalities relative to targets portrayed as incompetent and unsuccessful (Judd et al., 2005).

Horberg, Kraus and Keltner (2013) showed that displays of pride evoke inferences that the expresser endorses meritocracy over egalitarianism, and this effect is mediated by perceptions of the target's heightened self-interest. High-performing members of a group (like those with pride) are more likely to advocate a meritocratic distribution of resources, because it guarantees them a greater share of resources. Proud people are perceived as less moral and more focused on self-interest, and pride may strengthen agentic and diminish moral components in perception of others – Brosi, Spörrle, Welpe, and Heilman (2016) demonstrated, that the expression of pride has positive effects on perceptions of agency and inferences about task-oriented leadership, and negative effects on perceptions of morality and inferences about people-oriented leadership.
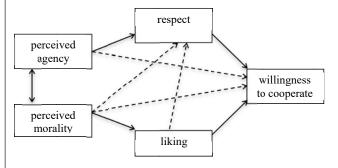
## Ambivalence of pride

Although in Western cultures pride is regarded as a positive and desired emotion (e.g., pride is one of the positive emotions in the PANAS; '*I feel I do not have much to be proud of*' is a reversed item of the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale), this emotion plays diverse roles within various human societies. Scollon, Diener, Oishi, and Biswas-Diener (2004) examined the loadings of specific emotions and discovered cultural differences in conceptualisations of pride: among Asian samples (Asian-American, Indian, Japanese) pride grouped with unpleasant emotions, whereas it clearly loaded with pleasant emotions within the European American and Hispanic samples. Kitayama, Markus and Kurokawa (2000) found that the Japanese experienced a higher frequency of socially engaging emotions (e.g. feelings of indebtedness), whereas Americans reported more experiences of socially disengaging emotions (including pride), which is consistent with the cultural tasks of interdependence and independence, respectively. The lack of pride is a virtue for Ladakhi – Buddhist people living in the Himalayas (Norberg-Hodge, 2009). Other researchers (e.g. Oishi, 2007) provide further doubts about universal positivity of pride. Cultural variation in the desirability of pride suggests that experiencing pride may modify the social perception processes in a way that may be threatening in collectivistic communities.

## The present study

In the current study, we test the hypothesis that social perception of immoral agentic individuals undergoes different processes when the perceiver experiences pride compared to when the perceiver is in an emotionally neutral state. We predict that the meaning of the morality-liking path (see Figure 1) is more important in emotionally neutral states than in the pride condition, whereas the agency-respect path becomes more important in the pride condition than in the emotionally neutral state.

**Figure 1. Model of social perception of immoral agentic target (solid lines – basic model; dashed lines – analysed model)**



We carried out the present study using the following experimental design. First, we activated memories of events related either to pride or to a previous winter (control condition). Next, participants read a short description of an immoral agentic person. Because cooperation with an immoral agentic individual may be ambivalent[1], we prepared the description in such a way that immorality cues were not directly threatening for the participants' potential cooperation. The impression of immorality of the target person was induced by the description of his (or her – we randomly assigned one of two gender versions of the description) marriage infidelity, which is not highly

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[1] Immoral agentic individuals are perceived as the most dangerous, because they are skilful (agentic) in their wrongdoings (immorality) (Wojciszke, 1994).

threatening for the potential cooperation, but may be informative for reasoning about morality. In further steps, participants assessed morality and agency of the target person, how much they liked and respected him or her, and how willing they would be to cooperate with the target person.

## Method

### Participants

Three hundred sixty two students living on the University of Lodz Campus voluntarily took part in our research (231 females, 121 males, 10 unreported).

### Procedure

Participants were asked to help in research on 'memory and social perception'. First, participants were asked to recollect a situation in which they felt proud (pride condition) or the previous winter's snow (neutral condition). In both conditions, they were asked to write down basic information about their recollection (when the recalled situation happened or when it started snowing). Second, participants read a short description of an immoral (infidelity in marriage) and agentic (successful in business) person called X (see Appendix). Later on we tried to uphold the manipulation and asked participants to answer the question about what most often arises pride in them (pride condition) or how long does the snow usually lie on the ground (neutral condition). Next, we measured respect toward target person ('*X deserves*

*respect*', '*X could be a model for others*', '*I appreciate X*'; $\alpha = .88$), and liking of target person ('*I feel attracted to X*', '*I feel that X is a person like me*', '*I like X*'; $\alpha = .87$). Later on we measured perceived agency ('*effective*', '*intelligent*', '*competent*', '*energetic*', '*active*'; $\alpha = .84$) and perceived morality ('*honest*', '*friendly*', '*sincere*', '*moral*', '*loyal*'; $\alpha = .78$) of a target person. Then again we sustained the manipulation by asking participants to rate (1) whether the situation they recollected (that made them proud) involved their own or someone else's actions, or (2) how much snow fell last December and February. At the end, we asked participants about their readiness to cooperate with a target person ('*It's worth having good relations with X*', '*It's worth suspending one's own values in order to enthral X*', '*It's better to avoid conflicts with X*', and '*It's worth being an ally of X*'). The reliability of the last scale was not satisfactory ($\alpha = .67$), so we performed factor analysis revealing that the third item ('*It's better to avoid conflicts with X*') had a low loading (.36); after excluding this item, reliability of the revised scale consisting of three items was satisfactory ($\alpha = .76$) and further analyses were performed on the three-item measure.

## Results

Participants in the pride condition rated agency of the target person as higher than participants in the control condition (Table 1). This is consistent with previous research that pride may strengthen focus on agentic content

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations of Variables (Upper Part) and Standardized Estimates and Total Effects for Analysed Model (Lower Part)**

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **descriptive statistics and inter-correlations** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| variable | M | | control | | | | pride | | | | |
| | control | pride | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | |
| 1. agency | 5.06$_a$ (1.36) | 5.50$_b$ (1.13) | .04 | -.04 | .06 | .18* | .14+ | .13+ | .27*** | .25** | |
| 2. morality | 1.93 (.87) | 2.08 (.89) | | .61*** | .52*** | .41*** | | .55*** | .50*** | .37*** | |
| 3. liking | 1.69 (1.15) | 1.84 (1.24) | | | .76*** | .44*** | | | .69*** | .36*** | |
| 4. respect | 1.87 (1.22) | 2.07 (1.35) | | | | .36*** | | | | .41*** | |
| 5. willingness to cooperate | 3.17 (1.37) | 3.37 (1.48) | | | | | | | | | |
| **standardized estimates for the improved model** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | total effects | | control | | | | pride | | | | |
| | control | pride | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | |
| 1. agency | .18 | .19 | .04 | – | **.09+** | .18** | .14+ | – | **.18***** | .15* | |
| 2. morality | .40 | .35 | | .61*** | .07 | .22** | | .55*** | .16* | .20* | |
| 3. liking | .30 | .22 | | | .71*** | **.33**** | | | .59*** | **.10** | |
| 4. respect | -.03 | .20 | | | | -.03 | | | | .20* | |

*Note.* $^+ p < .10$; $^* p < .05$; $^{**} p < .01$; $^{***} p < .001$; subscripts a and b mark groups that differ with $p = .001$, other $p$s for group comparisons are above .13; estimates are standardized regression weights for regression paths, and correlations for covariance; bolded regression weights differ between conditions.

in perception of others. Furthermore, all agency correlations with other variables were higher in the pride condition than in the control condition. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and inter-correlations for agency, morality, liking, respect, and willingness to cooperate.

In order to test the hypothesis that in the neutral condition the willingness to cooperate with an agentic immoral individual depends mainly on liking, whereas in the pride condition this willingness mainly depends on respect, we performed regression analyses in which willingness to cooperate was the dependent variable and liking, respect and the experimental condition (dummy coded) and their interactions served as independent variables. As predicted, both two-way interactions with the experimental condition turned out to be significant (see Table 2). Therefore, we treated the experimental condition (pride vs. neutral) as a moderator in further analyses.

The results of regression analysis encouraged us to test the model represented by solid lines in Figure 1. Path analysis performed in AMOS revealed that this model did not fit the data. On the basis of modification indices, we improved the model as depicted by dashed lines. In the improved model, we added direct paths from agency and morality to cooperation willingness and from morality and liking to respect. The latter modification reflects previously mentioned theories that morality and liking are the most important content dimensions of social perception and that they influence other interpersonal responses (like respect).

The modified model (depicted by dashed lines in Figure 1) showed an adequate fit in general ($\chi^2[1] = .05$, $p = .82$, CMIND/DF = 0.05, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA < .001), as well as for both conditions analysed separately (for pride: $\chi^2[1] = .71$, $p = .40$, CMIN/DF = .71, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA < .001; for neutral: $\chi^2[1] = 1.31$, $p = .25$,

CMIN/DF = 1.31, CFI = 1.0, RMSEA = .04). In the lower part of Table 1, we present standardised estimates for paths of our model separately for both conditions and the total standardised effects for the analysed variables.

As predicted, the agency to respect path and the respect to cooperation willingness path were significantly stronger ($z_{A-R} = 1.67$; $p = .05$; $z_{R-WtC} = 1.60$; $p = .05$), and the liking to willingness to cooperate ($z_{L-WtC} = -1.52$; $p = .06$) path was weaker in the pride condition than in the control condition. This means that although usually the willingness to cooperate with immoral agentic individuals is based mainly on their perceived morality and liking, activation of pride increases the significance of perceived agency and respect and decreases the role of liking and morality.

**Discussion**

Pride may expand individuals' scope of attention and broaden their action repertoires by driving them toward greater achievements in the future (Fredrickson, 2001). We demonstrate that the way for greater achievements of proud individuals may be achieved through cooperation with agentic immoral individuals. In our study when declaring their willingness to cooperate with an agentic immoral individual, proud participants were less concerned about the morality and liking of a target person, and more concerned about the agency and respect toward a target person than participants in the control condition.

When forming impressions of others, people search for information about their morality rather than agency (Wojciszke, Bazinska, & Jaworski, 1998), and the former dominates interpersonal cognition and evaluations (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014). Furthermore, perceived agency and morality influence interpersonal attitudes–liking and respect–in different ways: Liking is more strongly

**Table 2. Regression of the Willingness to Cooperate on Respect, Liking and Dummy Coded Experimental Condition as Well as Their Interactions**

|  | model I | | model II | | model III | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | ß | p | ß | p | ß | p |
| Respect | .23 | .001 | .21 | .004 | .21 | .004 |
| Liking | .22 | .002 | .29 | <.001 | .29 | <.001 |
| Pride [a] | .01 | .80 | .01 | .87 | .01 | .82 |
| Pride * respect |  |  | .12 | .086 | .12 | .085 |
| Pride * liking |  |  | -.16 | .029 | -.15 | .061 |
| Respect * liking |  |  | -.07 | .35 | -.07 | .34 |
| Pride * respect * liking |  |  |  |  | -.02 | .85 |

*Note.* [a] pride – experimental conditions dummy coded (neutral = 1; pride = 2); the main effects only are analysed in Model I, the two-way interactions are added in Model II, and the three-way interaction is added in Model III.

influenced by moral qualities, whereas respect is more strongly influenced by agentic qualities (Wojciszke, Abele & Baryla, 2009). Previous investigations showed that experiencing pride may lead to lower moral and higher agency perceptions (Brosi, Spörrle, Welpe, & Heilman, 2016). The results of our study extend previous findings, by documenting that pride modifies the pattern of inferences: When individuals experience pride, the role of perceived agency and in particular respect toward a target person increases, while the role of perceived morality and in particular liking of perceived persons decreases.

Our findings have important implications for ethics, especially in the organizational context. The nature of numerous organizations is increasingly competitive (Bono, Glomb, Shen, Kim, & Koch, 2013), and pride is reported to be one of the most frequently experienced emotions in organizations (Basch & Fisher, 1998), as it is closely connected to the achievement of socially valued outcomes (Leary, 2007). The diminished role of the morality-liking path, and the amplified role of the agency-respect path were both observed among those participants of our study who experienced pride. This may imply somewhat annoying role of pride as it paves the way for the ethical choices (e.g. of co-workers) in organizations. Therefore, the links between pride and moral judgments and choices deserves attention in further investigations.

Furthermore, the present results may have important implications for theories linking emotions with moral codes and cultural diversity of contemporary societies. Oishi (2007) suggested that pride is more relevant to positive emotions in the individualistic than collectivistic cultural context. Wojciszke and Bialobrzeska (2014) suggested that in collectivistic cultures, one's own morality is a significant predictor of self-esteem (particularly for women), whereas in individualistic cultures there is (almost) no relation between one's own morality and self-esteem. Finally, studies on the diversity of moral codes (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010) documented, that collectivistic cultures are more sensitive (than individualistic societies) to the loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation codes. Future studies, by further investigation of proud individuals' social perception mechanisms, may help to explain relations between self-conscious emotions like pride and moral reasoning across various cultures.

Although the present research showed a novel mechanism in social perception of proud individuals, it has some constraints. Information on immorality of a perceived person was not directly threatening for the perceivers and their potential cooperation with the person (the latter's immorality concerned his marital infidelity). Information on immorality directly threatening for individuals possibly cooperating with the perceived person (e.g. willingness to steal or cheat for money) would carry different meaning for participants and probably result in different responses. Therefore, the generalizability of our study is limited. Further studies should address other contextual, including cultural, factors that could influence the described effects.

## Summary

According to Fredrickson, positive emotions broaden the repertoire of thoughts and behaviours and build social, intellectual and physical resources. Mechanisms underlying building resources may be different for various positive emotions and pride, for example, may expand individuals' scope of attention and broaden their action repertoires by driving them toward greater achievements in the future (Fredrickson, 2001). In our study, we demonstrated that proud participants in comparison to participants in the control condition relied more on cues about agency and respect, and less on cues about morality and liking. As a result, this kind of reasoning may lead to facilitating cooperation with agentic though immoral individuals, which in the pride condition in contrast to the control condition is based more on respect than on liking of a target individual.

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## Appendix

### The Description of the Target Person

X comes from a little town in Eastern Poland – (s)he was born into a traditional family. Eight years ago (s)he finished his/her studies and through hard work (s)he recently got promoted to a managerial position in a large international company.

In his/her private life X is married and has two kids (five and three years old). Although her/his relationship seems happy, X regularly has romances and cheats on her/his spouse – most often (s)he does it during integration meetings with a colleague from her/his work. When his/her spouse is on business trips, (s)he sometimes also has affairs with other partners whom (s)he met casually.