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The management and expression of pride: Age and gender effects across adolescence



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ABSTRACT

Understanding of the role that positive emotions play in adolescent social development requires studying the normative development of these emotions. This research examined pride expression and management across adolescence, focusing on gender and developmental differences. Participants were 206 Caucasian youth (52.9% girls) in grades 5 ($M_{age} = 11.10$ years), 8 ($M_{age} = 14.45$), 11 ($M_{age} = 17.26$), and university ($M_{age} = 19.61$). Youth responded to two vignettes assessing reactions to pride-eliciting situations. Compared to boys, girls reported more intense pride experience and a higher likelihood of expressing pride. Increases across adolescence were found for self-efficacy in suppressing pride expression, and for expressing modesty in pride-eliciting situations. Older adolescents were less likely than younger adolescents to expect to receive a negative peer reaction when inhibiting pride. These results indicate the importance of gender-specific examinations of pride across adolescent development with implications for adaptive psychosocial functioning and positive psychology.

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Over the past two decades, an “affect revolution” (Adrian, Zeman, & Veits, 2011; Fischer & Tangney, 1995) has occurred in psychological research. This increase in emotion research has primarily been reflected in the study of negative emotions, particularly the role of maladaptive expression and management, and their links to psychopathology (e.g., Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Schweizer, 2010). Although interest in self-conscious emotions has greatly increased (e.g., Martens, Tracy, & Shariff, 2012; Tracy, Robins, & Tangney, 2007), negative self-conscious emotions (e.g., guilt, shame) have received the majority of theoretical and empirical attention. However, another recent trend, called “positive psychology” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001), has focused on human strength and resilience. Within this movement, theorists emphasize the importance of investigating positive emotions and their sequelae (Fredrickson, 2001). For example, feelings of pride have been found to relate to making moral choices within prosocial contexts (Krettenauer, Jia, & Mosleh, 2011) indicating the importance of studying the experience and expression of this emotion within normative

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development. In this study, we focused on the expression and management of pride across adolescence with attention to gender and developmental differences.

Pride across childhood and adolescence

Recent reviews of pride have focused on early developmental antecedents of pride (e.g., Lewis, 2008) or on adult experience of pride (e.g., Tracy & Robins, 2007a), yet do not address pride development during the late childhood or adolescent periods. Research on the development of pride has largely centered on children's understanding of pride (e.g., Tracy & Robins, 2007a) and recognition of pride (e.g., Tracy, Robins, & Lagattuta, 2005) in early and middle childhood. For example, young children are better able to recognize pride when presented with a narrative than with still or dynamic visual cues (Nelson, Hudspeth, & Russell, 2013). As children age, they improve in their ability to recognize pride (Tracy et al., 2005), and in their understanding of situations that elicit pride and the role of personal responsibility in pride (Graham & Weiner, 1991; Kornilaki & Chlouverakis, 2004; Thompson, 1989). Researchers also have examined changes in pride expression and understanding through middle childhood (Griffin, 1995; Stipek, 1995) and adolescence (Nelson & Russell, 2012; Orth, Robins, & Soto, 2010; Tracy & Prehn, 2012). Investigations of pride have used measures that assess the experience of pride (e.g., Tracy & Robins, 2007b), yet pride experience and pride expressions are not synonymous constructs.

As such, relatively little is known about whether, how, and why children and adolescents actually express or suppress pride expressions. Another gap in the literature concerns the evaluation of the frequency and intensity of pride expressions, emotion dynamics that likely exert important influences on emotion regulation efforts. Further, research has indicated that peers become increasingly important influences during adolescence (Grotevant, 1997; Steinberg & Silk, 2002), that social context influences emotional expressivity (Fuchs & Thelen, 1988; Shipman, Zeman, & Stegall, 2001; Zeman & Shipman, 1997), and that expressivity of positive emotions increases in peer relationships during adolescence (Flannery, Torquati, & Lindemeier, 1994). Yet, little research has examined general emotion regulation in adolescence (Adrian et al., 2011), let alone investigated pride regulation within a peer context (Perry-Parrish & Zeman, 2011; Perry-Parrish et al., 2015). Therefore, the goal of the present study was to investigate the development of multiple dimensions of pride expression and management from early to late adolescence within the peer context.

Gender differences in pride expression and management

Lay theories of self-conscious emotion typically rely on gender norms which describe women as more likely than men to experience guilt, shame, and embarrassment but less likely than men to experience pride (Plant, Hyde, Keltner, & Devine, 2000). Indeed, women do experience and/or express greater levels of guilt and shame than men; however, recent meta-analyses found no gender differences in children's pride experience and expression (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013; Else-Quest, Allison, Higgins, & Morton, 2012). Theorists have challenged researchers to move beyond describing gender differences in emotionality toward addressing the role of social context in emotional experience and expression across development (e.g., Shields, 2000). Studies of early school-age children find no gender differences in expression of negative emotions (Perry-Parrish, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2012), whereas in middle childhood and adolescence, girls report expressing sadness and anger more and expecting a more positive reaction to their emotional displays than boys (Brody & Hall, 2000; Zeman & Shipman, 1997). Children's outcome expectancies (i.e., predictions of social consequences) regarding emotional displays are a key component of their emotional competence (Shields, 2000). Such outcome expectancies are likely based on lay theories of emotion (Saarni, 1989) that describe robust gender differences regarding which emotions are acceptable to experience and express (Shields, 2000). For example, gender differences are found in hubristic and authentic pride. Hubristic pride entails stable, global attributions or feeling arrogant ("I am a good person") and authentic pride derives from unstable, specific attributions or feeling proud of an accomplishment ("I helped that person"). During adolescence and adulthood, women report experiencing less hubristic pride than do men (Orth et al., 2010; Tracy & Robins, 2007b). However, meta-analyses found no gender differences regarding pride expression (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013) or the experience of hubristic pride and authentic pride (Else-Quest et al., 2012). These findings stand at odds with traditional gender stereotypes of emotion that cast pride as a masculine, powerful emotion (Fischer, 1993). Thus, the present study addresses these conflicting findings by examining gender differences in the outcome expectancies for the expression and management of pride in social contexts.

Age differences in pride expression and management

In the present study, child age was investigated to document normative changes in pride expression and management across early to late adolescence. In middle childhood and adolescence, girls report expressing sadness and anger more and expecting a more positive reaction to their emotional displays than do boys (Brody & Hall, 2000; Zeman & Shipman, 1997). Similarly, girls express more positive emotions than boys in both middle childhood and adolescence (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013). Orth et al. (2010) assessed the experience of both authentic and hubristic pride cross-sectionally from late childhood through adolescence, finding lower levels of hubristic pride and higher levels of authentic pride in older compared to younger adolescents. In the current study, youth in grades 5, 8, 11, and university were recruited to investigate developmental changes over this age period because relatively few studies have examined general changes in emotional expressivity across all stages

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