



# Aristotle's virtue or Dante's deadliest sin? The influence of authentic and hubristic pride on creative achievement



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## ABSTRACT

This study ( $N = 589$ ) investigated the link between the disposition to experience pride and real-world creative achievement, as well as the mediating role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Furthermore, we disentangled the effects of two forms of pride: authentic and hubristic. We hypothesized that: (a) authentic pride should correlate positively with creativity; (b) intrinsic motivation should mediate the relation between authentic pride and creativity; (c) hubristic pride should correlate negatively with creativity; and (d) extrinsic motivation should mediate the relation between hubristic pride and creativity. Consistent with our hypotheses, authentic pride was positively related to intrinsic motivation and creativity, and intrinsic motivation mediated the pride-creativity link. Hubristic pride did not correlate with creativity although it was positively related to extrinsic motivation. These results support the idea that authentic and hubristic pride are differentially related to creative achievement, and provide preliminary evidence of the mediating role of motivation.

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In every society, creativity is one of the primary engines of social and economic progress (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; Simonton, 2000). Some level of creativity is necessary in almost any job (Unsworth, 2001). Therefore, it is important to ask what drives creative achievement. Who is the creative person?

Researchers have identified many personality correlates of creativity, including openness to experience, conscientiousness, and self-acceptance (for a review see Feist, 1998; Simonton, 2004). In addition, scientists (Amabile, 1983, 1996) have postulated that intrinsic motivation plays a vital role in promoting creativity. Despite the vast literature investigating the relation between personality and creativity, and between motivation and creativity, very few studies have examined both. Furthermore, studies investigating the link between personality and creativity have overlooked the role of affective traits, that is, stable dispositions to experience particular emotions. There is a large literature examining the influence of emotional states on creative processes. Traditionally, positive affect has been linked to better creative processing (e.g., Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005; Isen, Daubman, & Nowicki, 1987), but more recent studies have also linked negative affect to better creative processing (e.g. Akinola & Mendes, 2008). To integrate these findings, De Dreu, Baas, and Nijstad (2008) proposed a dual-pathway model of creativity, where both positive and negative emotions may lead to creative processing, but via different cognitive paths. Despite the abundant research on state emotions and creative processes, there is virtually no research on

whether the chronic tendency to experience a particular emotion is linked to real-world creative achievements. In the present study, we focus on the affective trait of pride, and examine whether individuals who are generally prone to experience this emotion show higher levels of real-world creative achievements. Pride is particularly relevant to creativity because of its centrality to achievement processes such as mastery motivation and its role in engendering and regulating pro-social behaviors; that is, we tend to feel pride when we work hard and accomplish something of societal value (Tracy, Shariff, & Cheng, 2010). In addition to investigating the link between pride and creative achievement, we examine the mediating role of motivation and disentangle the effects of two forms of pride: authentic and hubristic (Tracy & Robins, 2007).

Pride is a self-conscious emotion—an emotional reaction to our own self and behavior (Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2007). The ancient Greeks thought pride was “the crown of the virtues” and a catalyst for human achievement (Aristotle, 1925). In contrast, early Christian philosophers thought pride was the “deadliest of the Seven Deadly Sins” and a catalyst for human downfall and (self-) destructive behavior (Alighieri, 2003). Recent research has found that pride relates to both positive social consequences (Leary, 2007; Williams & DeSteno, 2009), as well as negative ones (Bushman & Baumeister, 2002; McGregor, Nail, Marigold, & Kang, 2005). To resolve these inconsistent findings, researchers have suggested the need to differentiate between two forms of pride: one adaptive and one maladaptive (Tangney, Dearing, Wagner, & Gramzow, 2000; Tracy, Cheng, Robins, & Trzesniewski, 2009; Tracy & Robins, 2007).

In a series of studies, Tracy and Robins (2007) demonstrated that there are two semantically and experientially distinct facets of pride, which they labeled authentic and hubristic pride. Authentic

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pride represents pride in concrete personal achievements (“I am proud of what I did”), and typically results from attributions to internal, unstable, and specific causes (“I won because I practiced before the game”). Hubristic pride represents pride in a global sense of the self (“I am proud of who I am”), and typically results from attributions to internal, stable, and global causes (“I won because I am always good at everything”). People who chronically make internal unstable attributions for various life events (i.e., attributions to effort, hard work, and specific skills) are prone to authentic pride, whereas people who chronically make internal stable attributions for various life events (i.e., attributions to talents, abilities, and global positive traits) are prone to hubristic pride (Tracy & Robins, 2007).

An emerging body of research suggests that these two facets are found: (a) when people rate how they feel in the moment or in general; (b) when people rate the emotions they think are being experienced by a target showing the non-verbal display of pride; (c) when people rate the semantic similarity among different pride-related feeling states; (d) after controlling for differences in valence and arousal, suggesting that they do not simply reflect differences in positivity versus negativity or activation; and (e) in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Chung & Robins, 2011; Tracy & Robins, 2007). Thus, the two forms of pride seem to reflect a fundamental aspect of human emotional experience.

Authentic and hubristic pride have divergent correlates (Cheng, Tracy, & Henrich, 2010; Damian, Robins, & Hess, 2010; Tracy & Robins, 2007; Tracy et al., 2009). Authentic pride is positively related to socially desirable and generally adaptive traits, such as Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, Openness to Experience, genuine self-esteem, volunteering and civic duty behavior, and perceived social support. Hubristic pride, however, is negatively related to Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, creative thought processes, and pro-social behavior, and correlates positively with maladaptive characteristics such as narcissistic self-aggrandizement, aggression, rejection sensitivity, social phobia, shame proneness, and anxiety.

From a functionalist perspective, the main role of pride is to motivate individuals to strive for achievements in socially valued domains (Tracy et al., 2010). Feelings of pride are pleasurable and thus reinforcing; many emotions entail “feeling good,” but only pride makes people feel good about *themselves*. Beginning in childhood, individuals learn to associate the experience of pride with positive feedback received for socially valued achievements. Due to pride’s reinforcing properties, individuals then become motivated to seek future achievements and develop identities that cohere with social norms. As a result, individuals who are successful in this pursuit are rewarded with social approval, acceptance, and increased social status (Tracy et al., 2010).

Supporting this functionalist/motivational view of pride, Williams and DeSteno (2008) showed that individuals who were induced to feel pride in response to task success were more likely to persevere at subsequent similar tasks. This finding suggests that the experience of pride promotes a desire and willingness to achieve. One limitation of this study, however, is that the authors used a general pride manipulation that could not differentiate between authentic and hubristic pride and their impact on motivation and achievement.

Because authentic and hubristic pride result from different attributions for success (unstable versus stable, respectively), researchers have proposed that they are linked to different goals and motivational orientations (Tracy & Robins, 2007). In particular, we know that attributions to specific, unstable factors such as effort (which are characteristic of authentic pride) are linked to mastery-oriented goals, that is, people who generally make unstable attributions will focus on the development of competence and task mastery. In contrast, we know that attributions to global, stable factors such as ability (which are characteristic of hubristic pride) are linked to performance-oriented goals, that is, people who generally make stable attributions will focus more on performing well relative to others or avoiding to appear incompetent (e.g., Harackiewicz, Barron, & Elliot, 1998). Therefore, it is reasonable to predict that authentic

pride should be linked to mastery-oriented goals, whereas hubristic pride should be linked to performance-oriented goals.

Given this conceptual link between the facets of pride and motivational goals, we predict that authentic and hubristic pride should be linked to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, respectively. Intrinsic motivation is the desire to perform activities for their own sake (i.e., enjoyment), whereas extrinsic motivation is the desire to perform activities for the projected external reward, such as approval from others (Amabile, 1996; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). Linking authentic and hubristic pride to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is particularly relevant in the context of achievement, because previous research has established that intrinsic motivation is conducive to creativity, whereas extrinsic motivation is detrimental to creativity (Amabile, 1996; Grigorenko et al., 2009; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010). Although some researchers have shown that extrinsic motivation may also lead to increased creativity (e.g., Eisenberger & Rhoades, 2001), their findings were likely due to the use of a different operationalization of creativity. Instead of using heuristic tasks such as writing a poem or making a collage (see Amabile, 1996), these researchers measured creativity using algorithmic tasks that the participants could solve by following precise instructions. Because the present study assessed “real life” creative achievements from a variety of domains (such as arts, music, or creative writing), it is unlikely that we measured only algorithmic-based achievements, and thus, we did not expect extrinsic motivation to have a positive effect.

Experimental studies have shown that the mere presence of an extrinsic constraint, such as expected evaluation, expected reward, or competition, can undermine intrinsic motivation and creativity (e.g., Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973). These findings have been replicated across the lifespan and across a variety of creativity domains (e.g., Dewett, 2007; Shin & Zhou, 2003). Higher levels of trait intrinsic motivation, as measured by the Work Preference Inventory (Amabile, Hill, Hennessey, & Tighe, 1994), have been linked to higher levels of creative achievement, whereas higher levels of trait extrinsic motivation have been linked to lower levels of creative achievement (Prabhu, Sutton, & Sauser, 2008).

Previous research (Damian et al., 2010) has shown that authentic pride relates to higher, and hubristic pride to lower, levels of creativity, when creativity was assessed using a laboratory task that asked participants to list creative uses for an everyday object such as a brick (Unusual Uses Test; Guilford, 1967). In the current study, we sought to extend these findings to “real-life” creative achievement, and to investigate the mediating role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Based on the research and theory described above, we hypothesized that: (a) authentic pride should correlate positively with creativity; (b) intrinsic motivation should mediate the relation between authentic pride and creativity; (c) hubristic pride should correlate negatively with creativity; and (d) extrinsic motivation should mediate the relation between hubristic pride and creativity. We predicted a negative relation between hubristic pride and creativity, despite the fact that anecdotal evidence and research have associated creative geniuses with narcissism and other psychopathological traits (Simonton, 2008). Although many geniuses seem to possess some level of psychopathology, studies have shown that extreme levels of psychopathology are detrimental to genius-level creativity, and that even moderate levels are detrimental to the creativity of people of average or greater intelligence (Carson, Peterson, & Higgins, 2003). Given these findings and our participant sample, we predicted a negative link between hubristic pride and creativity.

## 1. Method

### 1.1. Participants

Five hundred eighty-nine undergraduate students (74% female) from a large public university on the West Coast participated in exchange for course credit. The participants came from a wide variety of majors, but all of them were enrolled at the time in an

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