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FlashReport

Proud to cooperate: The consideration of pride promotes cooperation in a social dilemma

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HIGHLIGHTS

- We examine the role of pride in guiding cooperative behavior in a social dilemma.
- We suggest that considering pride activates related behavioral representations.
- Considering future pride (vs. joy and control) promotes cooperation.
- Considering future pride increases the importance assigned to cooperation.

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ABSTRACT

In social dilemmas, broad collective interests conflict with immediate self-interests. In two studies, we examine the role of pride in guiding cooperative behavior in a social dilemma. We find that the consideration of pride led to more cooperation compared to the consideration of joy or a control condition (Study 1) and compared to the consideration of enjoyment (Study 2). The importance participants assigned to cooperation mediated this effect of emotion on cooperation (Studies 1 and 3). We suggest that because pride is linked to pro-social behavior, considering pride activates the concept of pride which in turn makes related behavioral representations more accessible and thus increases cooperation.

Introduction

Imagine you have to decide between driving your car to work and commuting by train. Are you more likely to use public transportation and thereby maximize collective interests if you consider how proud you would be if you reach an academic achievement that you have worked hard for, or if you consider the joy you would feel if you watch a funny show?

The choice between private or public transportation is an example of a social dilemma (Dawes, 1980; for a review, see Van Lange, Joireman, Parks, & Van Dijk, 2013). Driving one's car is more comfortable for each individual, but using public transportation is more beneficial for the collective. Despite obvious collective benefits of cooperation, people often choose to maximize self-interest instead (Komorita & Parks, 1995), resulting in pressing problems such as pollution and overharvesting in common ponds.

In this research, we test how pride, an emotion that arises in social contexts, influences people's choices in a social dilemma. We suggest that the consideration of pride, compared to the consideration of non-social positive emotions (e.g., joy), promotes cooperation in a social dilemma.

Social emotions

Research has found that social (moral) emotions encourage cooperation in social dilemmas (De Hooge, Zeelenberg, & Breugelmans, 2007; Fessler & Haley, 2003; Frank, 1988; Ketelaar & Au, 2003). These emotions (e.g., shame, guilt, pride) are linked to the welfare of society or other people (Haidt, 2003) and function as moral barometers, providing feedback on one's social acceptability (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). Previous research has focused mainly on negative emotions showing that people cooperate more following the experience of guilt and shame than following neutral states or non-social negative emotions such as fear (e.g., De Hooge, Breugelmans, & Zeelenberg, 2008). The aim of the current research is to explore how activating the concept of pride, by having people consider the emotion without feeling it, influences cooperation in a social dilemma.

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Pride is a social emotion that arises when the individual feels responsible for a socially valued outcome (Mascolo & Fischer, 1995). Studies have shown that pride is positively related to achievement (Weiner, 1985), self-control (Katzir, Eyal, Meiran, & Kessler, 2010; Williams & DeSteno, 2008), and social status (Shariff & Tracy, 2009; Williams & DeSteno, 2009).

We propose that because pride is related to socially valued behaviors, activating the pride concept incidentally, without evoking its experience, is likely to motivate pro-social behavior (e.g., cooperation). Recent research indeed links pride to pro-social behavior (Van Der Schalk, Bruder, & Manstead, 2012). The more participants anticipated a feeling of pride for behaving fairly in the ultimatum game[1], the more resources they were willing to share with anonymous partners. The current research differs considerably from Van Der Schalk et al.'s (2012) as it deals with the consideration of incidental pride that is not necessarily related to pro-social behavior.

Overview

Given the link between pride and socially valued behaviors, we hypothesized that the consideration of pride would increase cooperation compared to the consideration of joy. This is because when one considers an emotion, the emotional concept becomes accessible and may activate behavioral representations related to it (e.g., pro-social behavior in case of pride).

We chose joy for comparison because it is a positive basic emotion that is not related to social behavior, but rather is experienced following rewards that serve reproductive, appetitive, or survival needs (Lazarus, 1991; Panksepp, 2000). This comparison enables to learn about the unique effect of the social aspect of pride, on cooperation in social dilemmas. To measure cooperation, we used the "fishing game" task (Bargh, Gollwitzer, Lee-Chai, Barndollar, & Trotschel, 2001; Kleiman & Hassin, 2011), in which participants play the role of one of two fishermen fishing in the same lake. In this task, cooperative behavior (i.e., preserving the common resource by returning fish to the lake) conflicts with acting out of self-interest (i.e., keeping fish for personal profit).

We tested our hypothesis in two studies that manipulated consideration of pride versus joy (Study 1) or enjoyment (Study 2) and measured cooperation in the fishing game. In Study 3, we manipulated consideration of pride versus enjoyment and measured the importance participants assigned to acting cooperatively in this game.

Study 1

In Study 1, we explored whether considering pride (vs. joy) promotes cooperation in a social dilemma. Participants described a future pride- (vs. joy-) eliciting event and rated pictures of people expressing the emotion, or did not describe any event or see pictures, as a control. Then they played the fishing game (Kleiman & Hassin, 2011). We predicted that participants would return more fish to the lake (i.e., cooperate more) following the consideration of pride, compared to joy and a control condition.

Method

Participants and procedure

Ninety-nine students (39 women) participated in return for 20 Israeli Shekels (~$5)[2]. The study was run on desktop computers in individual sessions. We randomly assigned participants to the considered pride, joy, and control conditions.

We began by manipulating the consideration of the specific emotion using Katzir et al.'s (2010) procedure. Participants wrote about an event that, if happened, would make them feel pride and self-worth (pride condition) or joy and fun (joy condition). To strengthen the considered emotion manipulation we exposed participants to four pictures of proud vs. joyful individuals (Tracy, Robins, & Schriber, 2009). To disguise the purpose of this task, participants rated the pictures on irrelevant dimensions (brightness and sharpness). Previous research has shown that this manipulation of considered emotion does not elicit the distinct emotional experience (pride vs. joy; Katzir et al., 2010). Participants in the control condition proceeded directly to the fishing game.

Next, participants played the fishing game with an alleged counterpart (Kleiman & Hassin, 2011). Participants read that the fish population must stay above 70, or all profits would be confiscated. In each of the 60 fishing seasons (i.e., trials), the number of fish caught (randomly chosen from 13 to 17) appeared on the screen. Participants decided how many fish they return to the lake and how many fish they keep for personal profit. As in Kleiman and Hassin (2011), to increase the believability of the task and the threshold, a message appeared after five specific trials throughout the task, warning participants that the fish population approached threshold. The massages were preprogrammed and were unrelated to participants' decisions. Participants were not informed about the size of the fish population throughout the task. After completing the game, participants rated the importance they assigned to returning fish to the lake during the task (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*). Kleiman and Hassin (2011) used perceived importance of cooperation as a measure of awareness to the activated concepts.

Table 1
Rates of topic of events in studies 1, 2, and 3.

Topic	Pride	Joy/Enjoyment	Total
	Study 1		
Achievement	93.33% (28)	16% (4)	58.18% (32)
Pro-social	3.33% (1)	0	1.82% (1)
Leisure	0	60% (15)	27.27% (15)
Other	3.33% (1)	24% (6)	12.73% (7)
	Study 2		
Achievement	90.91% (40)	2.63% (1)	50% (41)
Pro-social	6.82% (3)	0	3.66% (3)
Leisure	2.27% (1)	94.73% (36)	45.12% (37)
Other	0	2.63% (1)	1.22% (1)
	Study 3		
Achievement	100% (21)	10.52% (2)	57.5% (23)
Pro-social	0	0	
Leisure	0	84.21% (16)	40% (16)
Other	0	5.26% (1)	2.5% (1)
	Overall		
Achievement	93.68% (89)	8.53% (7)	54.23% (96)
Pro-social	4.21% (4)	0	2.26% (4)
Leisure	1.05% (1)	81.71% (67)	38.42% (68)
Other	1.05% (1)	9.76% (8)	5.08% (9)

Note. Actual numbers are presented in parentheses.

Results

A judge unaware of the condition coded the events participants described as related to pride or joy. Applying the exclusion criterion used by Katzir et al. (2010), we excluded 15 participants from the joy condition who did not comply with the instructions and wrote about a pride-eliciting event. One participant from the control condition did not complete the experiment, resulting in a sample of 83 participants.

In addition, two independent judges, blind to the hypothesis, coded the activities participants nominated for the considered-emotion essays, as related to achievement (e.g., academic, sports), pro-social

[1] In the ultimatum game (Güth, Schmittberger, & Schwarze, 1982), an allocator divides money between herself and a responder, who can, in turn, accept the offer or reject it, leaving both players with nothing.

[2] We planned for ~20 participants per cell. Following Tversky and Kahneman (1971), we planned for a larger sample (~40 participants per cell) in a replication.