The Influence of Pride Diagnosticity on Self-Control

Anthony Salerno, University of Miami, USA
Chris Janiszewski, University of Florida, USA
Juliano Laran, University of Miami, USA

We show that certain experiences of pride are more likely to be used as a diagnostic experience for interpreting and proceeding with a subsequent self-control dilemma. Pride is found to increase (versus decrease) self-control when its experience is interpreted as diagnostic of a person’s self-concept (versus goal pursuit progress).

[to cite]:

[url]:
http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/1014620/volumes/v41/NA-41

[copyright notice]:
This work is copyrighted by The Association for Consumer Research. For permission to copy or use this work in whole or in part, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at http://www.copyright.com/.
Examining the “Me” in Emotion: How Emotion and Different Aspects of the Self Influence Self-Control

Chair: Anthony Salerno, University of Miami, USA

Paper #1: The Downstream Consequences of Incidental Emotions and Preference Inconsistent Information
DaHee Han, Indiana University, USA
Nidhi Agrawal, University of Washington, USA
Morgan Poor, University of San Diego, USA
Adam Duhachek, Indiana University, USA

Paper #2: Failing to Meet the Standards: How Guilt Triggers Preferences for Unrelated Self-Improvement Products
Thomas Allard, University of British Columbia, Canada
Katherine White, University of British Columbia, Canada

Paper #3: ‘I’ versus ‘You’: Self-focus as a Mediator of Emotion Effects on Self-control
Nitika Garg, University of New South Wales, Australia
Gergana Y. Nenkov, Boston College, USA

Paper #4: The Influence of Pride Diagnosticity on Self-Control
Anthony Salerno, University of Miami, USA
Juliano Laran, University of Miami, USA
Chris A. Janiszewski, University of Florida, USA

SESSION OVERVIEW

In what ways are a consumer’s day to day emotional experiences and self-control dilemmas related to each other? Research has established that when consumers succeed (fail) at self-control, positive (negative) emotion is experienced in response (Carver and Scheier 1998). However, an overview of the literature shows that it is less clear when emotion will work to facilitate versus impede a consumer’s willingness to overcome a self-control dilemma (Winterich and Haws 2011). Understanding how emotion influences self-control requires focusing on the specific emotion experienced, as each discrete emotion activates unique cognitive and motivational properties that can change depending on the context (Tamir, Mitchell, and Gross 2008). In this session, we will focus specifically on how various discrete emotions influence aspects of the self, to then influence a consumer’s self-control.

The first paper, (Han, Agrawal, Poor, and Duhachek), shows how emotions create “situational selves” that shift preferences for certain types of information as a means of affirming one’s self. Specifically, they find that angry (versus shameful) people become more likely to exhibit increased counter-argumentation to inconsistent (consistent) information which affirms one’s self and leads to subsequent boosts in self-control. The second paper, (Allard and White), demonstrates that guilt (relative to sadness) leads to increased self-control by increasing the desire to engage in self-improvement rather than mood repair. This increased desire to self-improve is hypothesized to occur because guilt is experienced in response to violations of self-standards. The third paper, (Garg and Nenkov), suggests that sadness (relative to anger) leads to greater self-focus which decreases self-control efforts via indulgent consumption. In addition, they explore whether the increased indulgent consumption brought on by sadness attenuates if people are encouraged to shift their focus away from the self and towards others. The fourth and final paper, (Salerno, Laran, and Janiszewski), explores how certain experiences of pride are more likely to be perceived as a reliable experience which then influences self-control. Specifically, they find that in the absence of an active goal, pride that emerges from a stable behavioral pattern or success at a high effort task is interpreted as diagnostic of a person’s self-concept and leads to increased self-control efforts.

Thus, the objective of this session is to address two key questions: (1) what are the ways in which various specific emotions effect aspects of the self and (2) what are the downstream consequences for a consumer’s ability to exert self-control? This research is important as it comes at a time in which the costs of self-control failure are higher than ever before, reflected in consumer overspending (Bau- meister 2002), weight gain and obesity (Sharpe, Staelin, and Huber 2008), and addiction (Grant et al. 2010). We expect ACR attendees interested in the topics of emotion, the self, and self-control to be our primary audience with the session also being of general interest given the scope of theoretical constructs covered.

The Downstream Consequences of Incidental Emotions and Preference Inconsistent Information

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers are constantly exposed to information, which sometimes conflicts with current preferences. Research has shown that consumers typically resist preference-inconsistent information (e.g., Kunda 1990; Chen and Chaiken 1999) by discounting, ignoring, or selectively processing it in a way that reinforces pre-existing beliefs (e.g., Jain and Maheswaran 2000). Recent research has also highlighted the importance of consumers’ affective state, showing that emotions with differing valence and agency can influence decision-making after exposure to preference consistent versus inconsistent information (Agrawal, Han, and Duhachek 2012). The purpose of the present research is to tie together research on preference inconsistent information and emotional appraisals to explore the downstream consequences of emotions and appraisal (in)consistent messaging, specifically in terms of self-control. We employ the appraisal-tendency framework (e.g., Lerner and Keltner 2000; 2001; Lerner and Tiedens 2006) and self-affirmation theory (Sherman and Cohen 2006) to show that emotions of the same valence (e.g., shame and anger) can have different effects on self-control following confrontation with either preference consistent or inconsistent information.

According to self-affirmation theory, people are motivated to maintain the integrity of the self, where integrity is defined as a sense that one is a good and appropriate person (Sherman and Cohen 2006). We argue that incidental emotions create a situational self, such that the appraisal tendencies associated with an emotion can influence perceived “appropriateness” when presented with preference consistent or inconsistent information and this can activate the need to self-affirm. The appraisal tendency for shameful individuals is that they have transgressed an aspiration or ideal (Tangney 1991). Thus, to the extent that preference consistent information is considered a threat to this situational self (I’m wrong but you’re telling me I’m right), the individual will try to affirm the self by counter-arguing the message. The appraisal tendency for angry individuals is an offense against the self (Lazarus 1991); to the extent that preference inconsistent information is perceived as a threat to this situational self (I’m right, but you’re telling me I’m wrong), the individual will try to affirm the self by counter-arguing the message. Altogether, we predict that preference inconsistent (consistent) information is perceived as a threat to the situational self-identity of angry (shameful) individuals because it is at odds with the emotion’s respective appraisal. In an
act of self-affirmation, angry (shaeful) individuals will exhibit increased counter-argumentation toward this inconsistent (consistent) information. Such self-affirmation should boost subsequent self-control (Schmeichel and Vohs 2009). We tested these predictions across three studies.

In study one, we tested the predicted interaction using a 2 (emotion: anger, shame) x 2 (preference consistency: consistent, inconsistent) between subjects design (N = 118). First, the target emotions were primed using an emotional recall task that induced either anger or shame (cf., Robinson and Clore 2001). Next, preference consistency was manipulated using a two-part procedure adapted from previous research (Jain and Maheswaran 2000). In part one, subjects read a description of two different products. To form a moderately strong preference for Product A, subjects were told that scientific testing showed that Product A was superior to Product B on five out of eight product attributes. In part two, subjects were shown evaluations from actual users of both products and randomly assigned to either a preference consistent or inconsistent condition. In the consistent (inconsistent) condition, subjects were told that the percentage of respondents who felt Product A (B) performed better than Product B (A) was much higher than those who felt Product B (A) performed better. Self-control was measured by asking subjects’ snack preference on a seven-point scale anchored by: 1 = chocolate cake, 7 = apple. As predicted, the results revealed that in the preference consistent condition, subjects exhibited more self-control when they felt shame versus anger (p < .05). In contrast, subjects in the preference inconsistent condition exhibited more self-control when they felt anger versus shame (p < .05).

In study two, we sought to replicate these results and also provide process evidence (N = 167). The design and procedure mirrored that of study one, except that subjects were asked to provide cognitive responses after exposure to the product evaluations in part two of the preference consistency manipulation. These cognitive responses were then coded to reflect the proposed mediator, counter-argumentation. The results replicated those found in study one: subjects in the preference consistent condition exhibited more self-control when they felt shame versus anger (p < .05), but subjects in the preference inconsistent condition exhibited more self-control when they felt anger versus shame (p < .05). Further, counter-argumentation was shown to mediate this relationship, such that angry (shaeful) subjects expressed more counter-argumentation toward inconsistent (consistent) information, which in turn boosted subsequent self-control.

In study three, we sought converging evidence for our theory by including a trait measure of self-control. The design and procedure mirrored that of study one, with two exceptions. First, situational self-control was captured using a behavioral measure in which subjects were allowed to eat freely from a bowl of chocolates. Fewer chocolates consumed indicated greater self-control. Second, trait self-control was measured using Puri’s (1996) Consumer Impulsiveness Scale (CIS). Subjects that scored above (below) the median on the reverse-scored prudence subscale and on the hedonic subscale of the CIS were classified as prudents (hedonics) (N = 152). According to our theoretical model, we would expect the effects found in studies one and two would be amplified (attenuated) among hedonics (prudents) because these individuals are chronically low (high) in self-control. The results were consistent with these predictions, revealing the predicted three-way interaction between emotion, preference consistency, and trait self-control (p < .05). Specifically, hedonics exposed to preference inconsistent information exhibited more self-control when they were angry versus shameful (p < .05), while hedonics exposed to preference consistent information exhibited more self-control when they were shameful versus angry (p < .05). This pattern was attenuated among prudents.

Taken together, this research shows that emotions of the same valence (e.g., shame and anger) can have different effects on self-control following confrontation with preference consistent/inconsistent information. These results have implications for marketers and consumers alike.

Failing to Meet the Standards: How Guilt Triggers Preferences for Unrelated Self-Improvement Products

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Guilt has traditionally been described as a self-conscious emotion stemming from some violation of normatively held standard of behavior (Basil, Ridgeway, and Basil 2006; Heidenreich 1968) and is often viewed as an interpersonal emotion arising from concerns over a transgression against others (Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton 1994). This research examines a novel downstream consequence of guilt, namely, preferences for self-improvement products in domains unrelated to the source of the guilt.

Previous work on the downstream consequences of guilt has largely examined two types of outcomes. First, the experience of guilt leads individuals to engage in actions allowing for direct reparation of the wrong-doing (e.g., Dahl, Honea, and Manchanda 2005; Frijda, Kuipers, and ter Schure 1989). Second, guilt can lead to out-of-domain downstream consequences wherein the activation of guilt in one context can lead to prosocial behaviors in a second context (Konecní 1972; Regan et al. 1972). In other words, research suggests that people can take direct or indirect means of resolving guilt. Such behaviors have been attributed to resolving the negative emotions associated with guilt by repairing the mood or engaging in impression management (Cialdini et al. 1987).

We alternatively suggest that guilt can activate a desire for self-improvement. Drawing on past work suggesting that falling short of one’s own personal standards can activate guilt (Higgins 1987; Pelaova, White, and Shang 2013), we propose that guilt activation makes salient one’s failure to meet important self-standards. As a result, consumers will exhibit self-improvement strivings. When options to engage in moral actions to directly or indirectly alleviate guilt in the prosocial domain are not available, we predict that activating guilt in one domain leads to increased preferences for consumption choices geared toward general self-improvement in subsequent unrelated domains.

Our approach draws from a recent body of literature focusing on improving our understanding of the distinct motivational outcomes of specific emotions (Griskevicius, Shiota, and Nowlis 2010; Wilcox, Kramer, and Sen 2011; Winterich and Haws 2011) to compare the effects of guilt with those of sadness – an emotion of similar valence, intensity, and certainty about its source – and of neutral emotional states on consumption preferences. More specifically, we compare two strategies for regulating negative emotional states, preferences for self-improvement and mood-management options. We thus compare the typically more effortful and future oriented process of making changes to the self with the process of regulating one’s mood. We present four experiments investigating this spillover effect.

Study 1 uses a 3(emotion: guilt vs. sadness vs. neutral) between x 2(goal type: self-improvement vs. mood-management vs. control) within, mixed-model design. Participants recalled an event that either made them feel particularly guilty, sad, or recalled a neutral event. In an ostensibly separate study, they were asked to help evaluating upcoming book titles in the “100 Tips to...” series. Par-
Participants evaluated the titles “Becoming Your Best Self” as the self-improvement option, “Improving Your Mood” as the mood-management option, and other control titles (e.g., “Exploring Italy”). Results support the predicted interaction between the emotion recalled and the goal associated with each title. Participants in the guilt condition rated the self-improvement title higher than participants in the sadness or control condition. No significant difference was observed for the other titles. Study 2 uses a 2(emotion: guilt vs. sadness) between x 2(goal type: self-improvement vs. mood-management) within, mixed-model design. It provides additional support for the effect by testing how participants’ affective state influences agreement with alternative measures of self-improvement and mood-management desires. After performing a recall procedure similar to study 1, participants rated their agreement with both upward (self-improvement) and downward (mood-management) social-comparison behaviors. Participants in the guilt condition agreed more with upward social-comparison behaviors than those in the sadness condition. No difference was observed for downward social-comparison.

Study 3 uses a 2(emotion: guilt vs. sadness) between x 2(goal type: self-improvement vs. mood-management) within, mixed-model design. This study provides support for our theoretical framework by examining the mediating role of self-improvement motives. After engaging in a recall procedure similar to study 1, participants evaluated two functional music album titles. Participants in the guilt condition evaluated more positively than the ones in the sadness condition the self-improvement choice titled “Music to Improve Your Self,” which was recommended to “create the optimal environment for mastering new skills.” Ratings were not significantly different between conditions for the mood-management title “Music to Improve Your Mood,” which was recommended to “lift up mind, body, and spirit.” A difference score comparing participants’ ratings of each title also supported the notion of a relative preference for self-improvement over mood-management consumption. This relationship was mediated by participants’ self-improvement motivations.

Study 4 uses a 2(emotion: guilt vs. sadness) between x 2(self-theory: incremental vs. entity) between-subjects design. It extends our understanding of the phenomenon by highlighting the importance of believing in one’s ability to change. We posit that individuals who view their self as being malleable and improvable will be particularly likely to pursue self-improvement products in another domain after experiencing guilt. We examined the impact of self-theory (Chiu, Hong, and Dweck 1997) or the extent to which participants believed the self to be stable (i.e., entity theory) or malleable (i.e., incremental theory) on subsequent product choices. Participants were asked to select three samples from two functional teas: the self-improvement “Get Smart” tea or the mood-management “Get Happy” tea. Results support the predicted interaction between emotion and self-theory on consumers’ choices of self-improvement over mood-management products. Among participants in the guilt condition, incremental theorists made more self-improvement choices than entity theorists. No such difference was observed in the sadness condition.

Taken together, the results of the four studies provide converging evidence that activation of guilt can subsequently lead to preferences for self-improvement consumption choices in unrelated domains. This relationship is driven by the activation of a general desire for self-improvement and contingent upon people’s belief that the self can be improved over time.

‘I’ versus ‘You’: Self-focus as a Mediator of Emotion Effects on Self-control

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Anecdotal evidence has suggested that behavior and consumption are related with the emotion that a person is experiencing. Indeed, research on incidental or ambient emotions has discovered the pervasive tendency of emotions to carry over from one situation to another, colored behavior in unrelated tasks (e.g., Keltner and Lerner 2010; Loewenstein and Lerner 2003). Among emotions, sadness is unique because of two important reasons. First, although negative, sadness does not conform to the standard predictions based on its emotional valence. Based on a valence-based model, one would predict that negative emotions, including sadness, will trigger generalized negative assessments of the environment and lead one to perceive the world in negative ways. In contrast, sadness actually triggers positive valuation of new products, as measured by willingness-to-pay (Lerner, Small, and Loewenstein 2004). Second, the carryover effect of sadness drives consumption behavior across diverse domains. In the domain of eating, for example, sadness (relative to happiness) leads to increased consumption of tasty, fattening food products, such as buttered popcorn and M&M candies (Garg, Wansink, and Inman 2007; Garg and Lerner 2013). In the domain of consumer transactions, sadness (relative to a neutral state) increases the amount people spend to purchase items (Lerner et al. 2004).

One of the factors implicated in the sadness-consumption relationship is the enhanced self-focus that sadness engenders. Cryder et al. (2008) found that this increased self-focus was tied to higher willingness to pay for a new product (water bottle). However, these authors focused on just acquisition of a new product rather than generalized indulgent (hedonic) consumption across domains.

In the present research, we hypothesize that the self- versus other-focus associated with emotions and its effect on consumption might hold more generally across emotions. In our studies we examine two specific, negative emotions — anger and sadness. We focus on the “self” because based on the appraisal tendency framework it connects with one of the key dimensions - self-responsibility - differentiating emotions and their subsequent effects (Lerner and Keltner 2000; Smith and Ellsworth 1985). Self-responsibility refers to the degree to which one feels responsible for what is happening in the situation.

Understanding the differences in the effects of anger and sadness is important as they are two of the most common negative emotions associated with consumption experiences (Garg, Inman, and Mittal 2005). From a theoretical perspective as well, anger and sadness are very interesting, because even though both have a negative valence, they arise from different appraisal tendencies that lead to differential impact on a subject’s degree of self-responsibility (Smith and Ellsworth 1985). Whereas, a heightened sense of self-responsibility characterizes sadness, anger is associated with others being responsible for the situation (Lerner and Keltner 2000; Smith and Ellsworth 1985). Thus, whether anger and sadness lead to systematic differences in self-control relevant consumption becomes an important question to examine. The answers will broaden our understanding of the relationships between emotions and consumption in general; well beyond our current knowledge that is limited to the sadness-consumption links.

The current research also examines whether outcome elaboration moderates the emotion-consumption link. Extant research has established the beneficial effects of considering the potential future outcomes for effective self-control in the present (e.g., Baumeister and Heatherton 1996; Nenkov, Inman, and Hulland 2008). Prior re-
This research proposes that the influence of incidental pride on self-control is a function of (1) whether the experienced pride is perceived to provide diagnostic information about how to behave and, (2) a person’s present goal state. We find that two antecedents (i.e., the circumstances that were responsible for the pride) determine when pride is diagnostic: stability and effort. Stability is pride experienced as a function of how frequently an accomplishment is made within a domain. Effort is pride experienced as a function of the difficulty level of an accomplishment within a domain. When pride is high (versus low) in stability or effort in one domain, it should be perceived as diagnostic for what to do in other domains. This is because pride high in stability (effort) pertains to an accomplishment requiring persistence (overcoming difficulty). Such an accomplishment should be more trustworthy for what to do in other domains because persistence (overcoming difficulty) is applicable to attaining self-control success across all domains (Freund and Riediger 2006; Williams and DeSteno 2008).

We predicted that the effect diagnostic pride has on self-control will depend on one’s current goal state. When no regulatory goal is active, diagnostic pride should be used to make inferences about one’s self-concept (i.e., “The event that made me proud is part of who I am”). To the extent that opportunities (i.e., means) are available to pursue in other self-control domains important to an individual, diagnostic pride should increase self-control. However, when a regulatory goal is active, pride should become diagnostic to goal pursuit and supersede adjustments to the self-concept (Wheeler, DeMarree, and Petty 2007). Goal-pursuit relies on feedback for control; such that when progress is insufficient (sufficient), goal pursuit is increased (decreased) (Fishbach and Dhar 2005). Since the experience of diagnostic pride occurs in response to success in one’s long-term goals, pride should signal that the person is effective at regulatory behavior and to deemphasize the importance of the goal. Thus, diagnostic pride should lead to an inference that enough progress has been made toward the active goal (i.e., “The event that made me proud is enough of an accomplishment for now”) and decrease self-control.

We tested our hypotheses in three studies. Studies 1A and 1B used a two (regulatory goal: inactive vs. active) x two (pride experience: nondiagnostic vs. diagnostic) between-subjects design. The studies were identical in design and procedure except that each study manipulated one pride antecedent. Study 1A (1B) manipulated pride diagnosticity using the stability (effort) pride antecedent, where pride high in stability (effort) was diagnostic while pride low in stability (effort) was nondiagnostic. Participants first completed a lexical decision task that either primed the regulatory goal of being virtuous or no goal. Then participants responded to a hypothetical scenario that either evoked diagnostic or nondiagnostic pride. In study 1A (stability), participants in the nondiagnostic (diagnostic) pride condition were told to think about a single past experience (common past experiences) in which they were proud of eating healthy. In study 1B (effort), participants in the nondiagnostic (diagnostic) pride condition were told to think about a time in which they were proud of an A they received with very little effort (a great deal of effort) on their part. Lastly, participants completed a task purportedly related to everyday decisions but was actually our dependent measure for self-control. Participants made 15 total decisions, where each decision had two possible options, and one option was always more virtuous than the other. Results showed that when no regulatory goal was active, diagnostic pride led to a greater number of virtuous decisions made compared to nondiagnostic pride. However, when a regulatory goal was active, diagnostic pride led to a lower number of virtuous decisions made compared to nondiagnostic pride.
Study 2 builds upon studies 1A and 1B, showing that the perceived diagnosticity of pride is critical to predicting how pride will influence self-control. The study’s design was modified to include a manipulation which made the concept of nondiagnosticity either salient or non-salient, using a two (nondiagnosticity salience: low vs. high) x two (regulatory goal: inactive vs. active) x two (pride experience: nondiagnostic vs. diagnostic) between-subjects design. First, participants completed the priming task from study 1, with the regulatory goal changed to savings. Next, participants completed the pride manipulation from study 1A. Then, participants completed a task supposedly related to reading comprehension but in truth manipulated nondiagnosticity salience. In the low salience condition, participants read about a new bird exhibit at the local zoo. In the high salience condition, participants read about a new book that highlighted the importance of “not using success in one area of their lives to infer what they should do in other areas.” Lastly, participants completed a budgeting task and indicated how much they would save for the upcoming month, which served as our dependent measure for self-control. When nondiagnosticity salience was low, the pattern of saving intent replicated study 1. However, when nondiagnosticity salience was high, differences in pride experience attenuated, where only participants in the active regulatory goal condition exhibited greater saving intentions than those in the inactive regulatory goal condition.

Collectively, these studies show that the effect of pride on self-control is jointly determined by the diagnosticity of the pride experience and the presence (versus absence) of regulatory goals. As such, the findings contribute to our understanding of how emotions influence self-control, with important implications for consumer motivation and wellbeing.

REFERENCES


Wansink, Brian, Matthew M. Cheney, and Nina Chan (2003), “Exploring Comfort Food Preferences Across Gender and Age,” *Physiology and Behavior*, 79 (September), 739–47.


