Proud to Belong Or Proudly Different? Contrasting Effects of Incidental Pride on Conformity

Anirban Mukhopadhyay, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong, China
Ping Dong, University of Toronto, Canada
Xun (Irene) Huang, Sun Yat-sen University, China

We show that pride can either increase or decrease conformity depending on lay theories of achievement (entity/incremental). Those who attribute achievement to personal traits (entity theorists) tend to feel hubristic pride, and are less likely to conform than those who attribute achievement to effort (incremental theorists), who feel authentic pride.

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Emotion as Social Information: Insights Into the Interpersonal Effects of Pride, Embarrassment, and Sadness

Chairs: Chen Wang, University of British Columbia, Canada
Yanliu Huang, Drexel University, USA

Paper #1: Proud to Belong or Proudly Different? Contrasting Effects of Incidental Pride on Conformity
Xun (Irene) Huang, Sun Yat-sen University, China
Ping Dong, University of Toronto, Canada
Anirban Mukhopadhyay, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong, China

Paper #2: The Interplay Effect of Embarrassment and Agentic-Communal Orientation on Consumer Behavior
Yanliu Huang, Drexel University, USA
Chen Wang, University of British Columbia, Canada
Rui (Juliet) Zhu, Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business, China

Paper #3: Empathy-Neglect in Embarrassment-Avoidance: Observations from an Outsider
Li Jiang, University of California, Los Angeles, USA
Aimee Drolet Rossi, University of California, Los Angeles, USA
Carol Scott, University of California, Los Angeles, USA

Paper #4: Hardening My Heart: Persuasion Knowledge and Emotion Regulation
Nicole Verrochi Coleman, University of Pittsburgh, USA
Patti Williams, University of Pennsylvania, USA

SESSION OVERVIEW
All emotions arise from events that have relevancy to oneself. Certain emotions such as pride and embarrassment are particularly self-relevant, since they involve self-reflection and self-evaluation (Tangney and Tracy 2012). It is thus not surprising that a large body of research has examined the intrapersonal effects of emotions. For example, previous research has investigated the impact of pride on self-control (Wilcox, Kramer, and Sen 2011) and self-efficacy (Passyn and Sujan 2012), the antecedents underlying the self-appraisal elements of embarrassment (Dahl, Manchanda, and Argo 2001), and the impact of sadness on evaluative judgment (Schwarz and Clore 1983) and affect regulation (Andrade 2005). In addition to the intrapersonal impacts, emotion also plays a central role in our interpersonal life (Fisher and Manstead 2008; Van Kleef 2010). However, the interpersonal effects of emotions, particularly those self-conscious emotions (e.g., pride), have received little attention in consumer research.

In an attempt to advance our understanding of the interpersonal effects of emotion, this session brings together four papers, which particularly focus on pride, embarrassment, and sadness, to provide insights into how these emotions influence consumers’ interpersonal encounters. Specifically, this session investigates the following questions: How would pride influence consumers’ tendency to conform to others? How would embarrassment impact consumers’ impression management concerns in a social setting? How would taking other’s perspective affect consumers’ embarrassment avoidance behaviors? How would sadness influence consumers’ reactions towards interpersonal persuasions?

In the first paper, Huang, Dong, and Mukhopadhyay investigate the impact of pride on consumers’ conformity behavior. They show that pride can either increase or decrease conformity depending on lay theories of achievement (entity/incremental). Specifically, those who attribute achievement to personal traits (entity theorists) are less likely to conform than those who attribute achievement to effort (incremental theorists).

In the second paper, Huang, Wang, and Zhu examine the effect of embarrassment on consumers’ impression management concerns in product selection and donation behavior. They show that when feeling embarrassed, consumers demonstrate behaviors to create a positive self-impression and at the same time to be consistent with their agentic-communal orientations.

In the third paper, Rossi and Scott also explore embarrassment by focusing on how taking other’s perspective influences embarrassment-avoidant behavior. They suggest that perspective-taking prompts consumers to engage in less embarrassment-avoidant behavior. But this only occurs for consumers with high public self-consciousness.

In the fourth paper, Coleman and Williams investigate the impact of sadness on consumers’ reactions to interpersonal persuasion. They show that consumers are naturally suspicious of sad (vs. happy) appeals by engaging in emotion regulation. This effect could be strengthened when persuasion knowledge is made accessible.

We believe that this session will appeal to a wide audience at ACR. There has been a limited understanding on emotions, particularly those self-conscious emotions, in an interpersonal setting. This session advances the literature by investigating certain important yet less studied emotions that range from cognitively differentiated affects (e.g., pride and embarrassment) to more global affects (e.g., sadness), and by providing insights into how each emotion may affect consumers’ interpersonal behaviors (e.g., conformity, donation). Twelve studies were included in total with three studies in each paper. Also, this session echoes the conference mission of making a difference by reinventing established perspectives in theory and by providing socially impactful insights in practice.

Proud to Belong or Proudly Different? Contrasting Effects of Incidental Pride on Conformity

EXTENDED ABSTRACT
Pride is as an emotional response to success or achievement (Lazarus 1991; Maclin and Patrick 2006; Mukhopadhyay and Johar 2007), in which the self is attributed as having achieved an important goal (Tracy and Robins 2004). It is a common response to important life events (e.g., graduation) as well as everyday occurrences (e.g., get praised by teacher). Previous research on pride has mainly focused on how incidental pride influences one’s own behavior in a personal setting. For example, pride can influence consumers’ self-control (Wilcox, Kramer, and Sen 2011), and is linked to self-efficacy (Passyn and Sujan 2012), and motivation for future achievement (Fredrickson 2001; Louro, Pieters, and Zeelenberg 2005). In contrast, the current research aims to explore whether and how incidental pride can influence consumers’ preferences given social influence, specifically, their tendency to conform.

We propose that the effect of pride in such situations depends on the lay theories that consumers hold about their achievements. Lay theories influence how people interpret and predict their social worlds (Wyer 2004). Given that our domain of interest is the pride
that people feel in response to achievement, we draw on Dweck and Leggett’s (1988) seminal concepts of lay theories of achievement. In this model, “entity theorists” believe that intelligence and ability are fixed quantities and cannot be changed, whereas “incremental theorists” believe that intelligence and ability are malleable resources and thus can be improved through effort. Hence success is attributed differently depending on one’s lay theories – either to traits (for entity theorists), or to efforts (for incremental theorists; Molden and Dweck 2006).

How do these lay theories influence the effect of pride on conformity? The key insight here is that pride is not a unitary construct, but rather two different types of pride – hubristic and authentic (Tracy and Robins 2007). Hubristic pride results from achievement that is attributed to internal, stable, and uncontrollable causes (“I did well because I’m great.”), whereas authentic pride results from achievement that is attributed to internal, unstable and controllable causes (“I did well because I tried.”). Importantly, the distinct patterns of attributions for hubristic versus authentic pride are parallel to those made by entity versus incremental theorists.

Now, hubristic and authentic pride can lead to different interpersonal relationship goals. Hubristic pride is associated with superiority (Tracy and Robins 2007) and narcissism (Lewis 2000; Tracy and Robins 2007). People feeling hubristic pride are motivated to “get ahead” at the expense of others (Cheng et al. 2010). In contrast, authentic pride is associated with feelings of self-worth and authenticity (Tracy et al. 2009), and activates the interpersonal goal of “getting along with others” (Cheng et al. 2010). People feeling authentic pride are more likely to feel similarity with others (Batson et al. 1997; Cialdini et al. 1997).

Because perceptions of similarity are an important predictor of conformity (Castelli et al. 2001; Cialdini 2001), we hypothesize that authentic pride will increase conformity, whereas hubristic pride will enhance uniqueness preference. More generally, incremental theorists who feel proud will make effort-based attributions and thus conform, similar to those experiencing authentic pride. In contrast, entity theorists who feel proud will make trait-based attributions and not conform, similar to those experiencing hubristic pride.

Three studies investigated these possibilities. In study 1, we examined if participants who experience effort-based pride (i.e., incremental theorists) express greater conformity than those who experience trait-based pride (i.e., entity theorists). We first asked participants to recall an event when they felt pride due to their efforts versus due to their own traits. Participants then performed an ostensibly unrelated on-line shopping task in which they chose one T-shirt from a set of four options, which were identical except that three of them were white and one was red. A significantly greater percentage of participants in the trait-based (versus effort-based) pride condition chose the uniquely-colored T-shirt.

The procedure of study 2 was essentially the same, except for two differences. First, instead of using manipulating two types of pride, we manipulated entity versus incremental lay theory by presenting participants with a Psychology-Today type article describing the lay theory of achievement (Chiu, Hong, and Dweck 1997), and then asked participants to recall either a pride experience or a typical school day experience (control condition). Second, we used four different product categories to measure conformity. Results showed that proud participants who believed in the entity (vs. incremental) theory showed less conformity. There was no effect in the control condition, meaning lay theory itself did not influence conformity.

Study 3 extended the previous results in the following ways. First, we measured participants’ lay theories, instead of manipulating them. Second, we generalized our findings using a different product category and a different measure of conformity. Participants first recalled either a pride experience or a typical school day experience, and then indicated their evaluations of a popular brand of hiking GPS and a unique one. The difference between the two evaluations served as an index for conformity. In the third task, participants indicated their belief toward implicit theory (entity vs. incremental). Regression analyses with pride condition, mean centered lay theory, and their interaction as independent variables and the conformity tendency as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect of lay theory and a significant interaction effect. Spotlight analyses (Aiken and West 1991) revealed entity (vs. incremental) theorists evaluated the popular hiking GPS less favorably when they were feeling proud. However, no significant effects were obtained among incremental theorists.

This research demonstrates a novel effect of incidental pride on consumers’ conformity preference. The distinction between the two types of pride is new to consumer research, and the underlying mechanism represents a synthesis of the literatures on emotions and lay theories.

The Interplay Effect of Embarrassment and Agentic-Communal Orientation on Consumer Behavior

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Embarrassment is an experience that nearly everyone is familiar with. It occurs “whenever an individual is felt or have projected incompatible definitions of himself before those present” (Goffman 1956), such as when people purchase embarrassing products or when they do not have enough money to pay at the register. Despite its prevalence, little research has been done looking at how embarrassment influences consumer behavior. Hence, this research seeks to investigate how embarrassment impacts consumers’ product selection and donation behavior.

According to typical psychological models of embarrassment (e.g., Edelmann 1981; Keltner and Buswell 1997), behavior inconsistent with social rules in the presence of real or imagined others leads to arousal. The arousal gives rise to nonverbal behavior that provides information to the self and the observer to label the arousal as embarrassment. There is a need of “face-saving” after embarrassing interchange to honor, maintain, and restore the desired public identity (Goffman 1956, 1959). The need motivates people to develop strategies to alleviate distress and create a favorable impression (Brown and Garland 1971; Keltner and Buswell 1997).

We argue that this face-saving need interacts with agentic-communal orientation to influence consumers’ product selection and donation behavior differently. Individuals with agentic orientation are self-centered and tend to be independent from other people, whereas individuals with communal orientation are other-oriented and tend to focus on interpersonal affiliation (Eagly 1978, 1987; Carlson 1972). Therefore, we hypothesize that when feeling embarrassed, people will follow strategies that are consistent with their orientation and at the same time try to create a positive self-impression. Specifically, for product selection which is self-focused, when feeling embarrassed, communal individuals (e.g., females) will prefer in-group options to enhance affiliation with others, while agentic individuals (e.g., males) will prefer non in-group options to reflect their individuality. Both strategies create a positive self-impression. In the domain of donation which is other-focused (Eagly 1987), the results will reverse (i.e., favor in-group) for agentic individuals. This is because agentic individuals normally favor out-group charity, but when feeling embarrassed, favoring in-group charity helps them cre-
ate favorable self image and at the same time allows their agentic goals still to be met (Winterich, Mittal, and Ross 2009).

We tested these hypotheses in three studies. In Study 1, we used participants’ gender as a proxy of agentic/communal orientation. Participants came in groups of three, and were asked to choose and evaluate products in a hypothetical shopping task. The products contain either embarrassing products (e.g., adult diapers) or regular products (e.g., paper towel), depending on the condition. The experimenter verbalized each participant’s choice loudly and ensured other participants to hear it. Embarrassment was successfully induced in this way, as the awareness of social presence is critical in creating embarrassment (Dahl, Manchanda, and Argo 2001). After the embarrassment manipulation, participants chose between two pens as a thank-you gift, one with a university logo and the other with no logo (i.e., in-group vs. non in-group). Their pen choice served as our dependent variable. Consistent with our hypothesis, there was a significant interaction between emotion (embarrassing vs. control) and gender, such that females preferred the logo pen whereas males preferred the no-logo pen when feeling embarrassed.

In Study 2, we tested our hypothesis in the donation domain. After a similar embarrassment manipulation with study 1, participants indicated how much they were willing to donate out of their $10 compensation towards either an in-group or an out-group charity. Their agentic-communal orientation was also assessed at the end. As predicted, we found a three-way interaction between gender, emotion, and charity type. Specifically, for females, there was only a main effect of charity such that females preferred in-group (vs. out-group) charity regardless of the emotion. However, for males, there was an interaction between emotion and charity type, such that males donated more to in-group charity in the embarrassing condition, but donated more to out-group charity in the control condition. The pattern maintained the same when we replaced gender with agentic/ communal scores, which further supported our proposition.

In Study 3, we manipulated agentic-communal orientation and looked at both donation and product evaluation. We adopted a sentence-scrambled task from Kurt, Inman, and Argo (2011) to prime agentic/communal orientation at the beginning. Embarrassment was induced as per previous studies. After the same donation task as that in study 2, participants were asked to evaluate a hypothetical vacuum that was made either domestically (i.e., in-group) or internationally (i.e., out-group). For donation task, we replicated our previous results. For product evaluation, there was a three-way interaction between priming, country of origin, and emotion, such that agency-primed individuals showed more favorable attitudes towards the out-group vacuum when feeling embarrassed (vs. neutral), whereas communally-primed individuals had more favorable attitudes toward the in-group vacuum in the embarrassing condition.

Results from three studies show that embarrassment and agentic-communal orientation jointly influence consumers’ behaviors. Embarrassed individuals tend to engage in behavior consistent with their orientation and creating a positive self to “save face”.

**Empathy-Neglect in Embarrassment-Avoidance: Observations from an Outsider**

**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

As consumers, we often forgo opportunities to help ourselves and others in order to avoid embarrassment. Our fear of embarrassment prevents us from admitting we do not know how a product works such as a mortgage or birth control, and from asking advice about what we should do such as our mounting mortgage bills and unplanned pregnancies. In many cases, if we are to help ourselves and others, we must overcome our fear of embarrassment. This research offers advice on how to curb consumers’ embarrassment-avoidant behavior.

Recent research should bring comfort to those who worry about others witnessing our embarrassing blunders. First, our blunders often go unnoticed by others (Gilovich, Medvec, and Savitsky 2000). Nevertheless, we overestimate how much others pay attention to us; a tendency termed the ‘spotlight effect’. Second, when others do notice our embarrassing blunders, they tend to make kinder judgments than we expect (Savitsky, Epley, and Gilovich 2001). Still, we fail to take others’ empathy into account, a tendency termed ‘empathy-neglect’ (Epley, Savitsky, and Gilovich 2002). Both of these tendencies—the spotlight effect and empathy-neglect—underlie embarrassment-avoidance. However, no studies to date have examined how these two factors interact to increase or decrease embarrassment avoidance.

A main goal of our research is to investigate the roles that both the spotlight effect and empathy-neglect play in influencing embarrassment-avoidance. For example, if empathy-neglect was reduced, would a spotlight still cause embarrassment-avoidant behavior? This is an important issue since it may often be impossible for consumers to avoid being in the spotlight (e.g. when purchase of a product is public knowledge). Alternatively, would empathy-neglect cause embarrassment-avoidance absent a spotlight? This is also an important issue since it would imply an influence on consumer behavior regardless of whether it occurs in public or private. For example, do consumers who avoid public opportunities to learn about a product, such as a mortgage or birth control, avoid private opportunities as well? An understanding of the separate and combined effects of the spotlight effect and empathy-neglect could provide a basis for effective strategies to manage embarrassment-avoidance. To this end, we must investigate the role of one individual-difference variable, namely public self-consciousness (PUBSC), since it determines whether one or both of these tendencies are at play.

Experiment 1 tested the initial hypothesis that although high (vs. low) PUBSC consumers have higher expectations of being embarrassed and thus engage in embarrassment-avoidance, all consumers regardless of PUBSC suffer from empathy-neglect and persist in embarrassment-avoidant ways. Three ads for an embarrassing but well-paying job were created: control, spotlight disclaimer, and empathy reminder. Analysis found that PUBSC moderated embarrassment-avoidant behavior due to the spotlight effect but not due to empathy-neglect. Specifically, the significant interaction between ad type and PUBSC arose from the control ad, which simply provided details about the job opportunity. High PUBSC was associated with lower application intentions. However, there was no relationship between PUBSC and application intentions in response to either the spotlight disclaimer or the empathy-reminder ad.

We next investigated a process by which empathy-neglect can be countered. Experiment 2 demonstrated in the healthcare context that perspective-taking is a helpful (hurtful) tool to correct for empathy-neglect among high (low) PUBSC consumers. Participants were prompted to take the perspective of either the interviewer or the interviewee, depending on the condition, and indicated their intentions to be interviewed about sensitive issues relating to their sex lives. In a control condition there were no perspective-taking prompts. In addition, half of participants received a cognitive load manipulation. We predicted that cognitive load would inhibit the presumably effortful empathy-transfer. Analysis revealed a three-way interaction among PUBSC, perspective-taking, and cognitive load, such that empathy-transfer (and reduction of empathy-neglect among high PUBSC consumers) could be triggered by adopting the perspective
of the interviewer (but not the interviewee), and required psychological effort (no load).

Experiment 3 tested our theorizing in another important consumer context, advertising embarrassing products. After exposure to a real-world flatulence prevention brand, participants’ purchase intention was assessed and open-ended responses were collected to examine the proposed empathy-transfer process. Analysis found the predicted three-way interaction among PUBSC, ad type, and cognitive load on purchase intentions. A two-way interaction emerged between PUBSC and load for the control ad conditions, whereby higher PUBSC levels were associated with more embarrassment avoidance under no load. Load exacerbated the PUBSC effect. Further, analysis of the thought protocols in terms of self-related versus other-related thoughts under load and no load provided ancillary evidence as to the effortful nature of the empathy-transfer process, as well as chronic differences in how high versus low PUBSC consumers respond to embarrassing ads and perspective-taking prompts.

Together, these three experiments demonstrate the power of our theory to explain, predict, and modify embarrassment-avoidant consumer behavior, even when the consequences are financially and socially significant.

Hardening My Heart: Persuasion Knowledge and Emotion Regulation

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers do not passively process marketing influence attempts, but rather use persuasion schemas to interpret, resist, and reject persuasion (Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Friestad and Wright 1994). The “Persuasion Knowledge Model” (PKM) proposes that consumers develop knowledge structures about persuasion, influence agents, and selling tactics, and they use this knowledge to cope with persuasion episodes. Researchers propose an assortment of persuasion tactics; invoking social norms, “buttering up” the target, bargaining, and more (Friestad and Wright 1994; Rule, Bisanz, and Kohn 1985). While many of these have been investigated, a repeatedly mentioned but rarely examined tactic is emotions. In fact, using emotional appeals was one of the most common interpersonal persuasion techniques (Rule, Bisanz, and Kohn 1985). Given this, understanding whether consumers recognize emotional appeals as persuasive tactics and how they respond to these attempts is needed.

We specifically focus upon emotion appeals that use sadness to motivate consumers. Sadness results from experiences of loss that cannot be avoided (Frijda 1986), and prompts actions to change the situation (Frijda, Kuipers, and ter Schure 1989). Expressions of sadness indicate a need for help (Izard 1977) and promote feelings of sympathy (Small and Verrochi 2009), leading to enhanced prosocial behaviors (Small and Verrochi 2009). We draw upon emotion regulation theories—how individuals manage the emotion antecedents and emotional responses (Gross 1998)—to propose that when consumers recognize an emotional appeal as an influence attempt, they regulate their emotions to resist persuasion.

Study 1 examined whether consumers spontaneously regulated their emotions when they encountered emotional advertisements, and whether this would differ for happy versus sad appeals. This was a three-group design, where participants saw either a happy, sad, or neutral commercial. Emotional content was manipulated through pictures and music with identical information. After the commercial, participants reported attitude toward the ad, the degree of emotion regulation, and beliefs about manipulative intent (to measure persuasion knowledge). Attitude toward the ad was the highest for the happy commercial compared to both the neutral and sad commercials. The amount of emotion regulation was highest for the sad commercial, whereas no difference occurred for the neutral and the happy commercials. Also, the sad commercial prompted beliefs of manipulative intent, but the happy and neutral commercials were seen as only mildly manipulative. And indeed, serial mediation found that sad appeals prompted inferences of manipulative intent, which in turn induced emotion regulation, which finally predicted attitude toward the ad. Once the indirect effects were accounted for, the direct effect of emotion appeal was no longer significant in predicting attitude toward the ad, implying full mediation through both manipulative intent and emotion regulation (Preacher and Hayes 2008). These results suggest that consumers naturally see sad appeals as manipulative, triggering an emotion regulating response. However, happy commercials “fly under the radar” and do not prompt the activation of persuasion knowledge and its concomitant rejection.

Study 2 manipulated the accessibility of consumers’ persuasion knowledge. The design was 3 emotions (happy, sad, neutral) x 2 accessibility (high, low); accessibility was manipulated by reading an article about persuasive tactics (high) or about superstitious beliefs (low) prior to the commercial. As before, participants rated their attitude toward the ad, emotion regulation, and manipulative intent. In the low accessibility conditions, the results from study 1 were replicated: emotion regulation and manipulative intent were only high for participants viewing the sad commercial. However, results in the high accessibility conditions showed a different pattern. Specifically, those who viewed the happy or the sad commercials both increased emotion regulation and manipulative intent inferences. Results suggested that when persuasion knowledge was accessible, consumers relied on it to interpret the persuasive messages; happy appeals were also seen as utilizing persuasion, leading to consumers’ emotion regulation.

Study 3 replicated study 2 in the context of donation. Specifically, participants first read the article from study 2 to manipulate accessibility. Then participants were exposed to one of three advertisements for a children’s cancer charity, where the child in the ad was expressing either happiness, sadness, or a neutral expression (Small and Verrochi 2009). Previous work has shown that individuals who view the sad child experience sadness themselves, via emotion contagion, and this experience of sadness then increases sympathy and prosocial behaviors. We predicted that the accessibility of persuasion knowledge would moderate these effects. A significant interaction of persuasion knowledge accessibility and emotion emerged: for those with low persuasion knowledge accessibility, sympathy toward the child was the greatest for the sad ad, replicating earlier work. However, for those with high persuasion knowledge accessibility, the pattern reversed that sympathy for the child was the lowest for the sad ad (no difference occurred between the happy and the neutral ads).

Three studies demonstrate that individuals resist emotion-based persuasive attempts through emotion regulation; however the natural response is only toward sad appeals. When persuasion knowledge is made accessible, individuals recognize that happy appeals are also influence attempts and regulate those as well. Our findings certify that emotion regulation can be used to resist persuasion, suggesting new directions for studying emotion regulation.

REFERENCES


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