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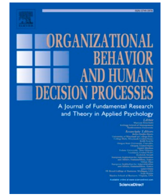

When expressing pride makes people seem less competent

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ABSTRACT

People often take great satisfaction in their professional and personal accomplishments. Previous research suggests that sharing these pride experiences enhances impressions of one's competence. However, this past work has examined pride in contexts where others' reactions were absent, unlike most workplaces and performance-oriented settings where diverse reactions to similar achievements occur. I argue that what pride signals about a person's competence depends on how others respond to similar successes. Specifically, expressing pride in a performance signals lower competence when others do not share the same prideful reaction. Nine preregistered studies support this prediction. The results also showed that expressing pride in a performance indicates that the performance is close to one's peak ability. This inference about someone's performance potential helped explain why expressing pride can signal lower competence. Overall, this work shows that pride is not an unconditional indicator of competence but rather contingent on the emotional responses of others.

People often take great satisfaction in both their professional and personal accomplishments. In short, they feel proud. Pride is a positive, self-conscious emotion (Tangney & Fischer, 1995). Pride is a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction derived from one's achievements (Dictionary.com, 2021; Grandey et al., 2018). The sources of pride are diverse. Pride can arise from achieving personal milestones or successfully navigating challenging business deals. It can arise from delivering a compelling presentation, winning a competition, securing a new job, or contributing to a scholarly publication (see Hurwitz-Michaely, 2021).

Feeling proud of one's accomplishments is associated with many personal benefits, including greater motivation, performance, and well-being (Ho et al., 2016; Ilies et al., 2024; Williams & DeSteno, 2008). Sharing what one is proud of with others is also associated with social and organizational benefits (Gable et al., 2004; Ilies et al., 2024; Watkins et al., 2023), not least of which is broadcasting one's successes to others (Witkower et al., 2020). Indeed, social functionalist perspectives posit that pride evolved as a mechanism for managing social status by signaling accomplishments and skills (Shariff et al., 2012; Tracy et al., 2013). Expressing pride, or the communicating of one's feelings of pride to others through nonverbal expressions or verbal communication, has been shown to enhance one's perceived agency, leadership traits, rank, prestige, and knowledge (see Tracy et al., 2023 for a review). Across cultures, nonverbal expressions of pride consistently convey higher status (Tracy et al., 2013), supporting the idea that it is an automatic status symbol (Durkee et al., 2019). Consequently, expressing pride in one's achievements is widely regarded as an effective strategy for fostering favorable impressions of competence (Martens et al., 2012; Tracy et al., 2023).

I take a different perspective, suggesting that expressing pride is not a reliable strategy for signaling competence, but rather a risky one. I argue that pride is not an unconditional indicator of competence. Instead, what pride signals about one's abilities and skills is contingent on the emotional responses of others. When others do not express pride in a specific performance, conveying pride in that same performance can backfire, leading to perceptions of reduced competence rather than increased. Previous research on pride has not considered how diverse emotional responses to the same performance affect the inferences people make from others' expressions of pride. It has focused instead on single individuals reacting to their own performance in isolation (see Table S1 in the SOM for a review). While this approach has revealed critical insights about pride (see Tracy et al., 2023 for a review), it does not reflect the reality of most workplaces or performance-oriented contexts, where varied reactions to similar achievements are common.

The results of nine preregistered experiments (seven reported in the main text and two in the supplement) supported the prediction that expressing pride leads to lower judgments of competence when someone else responds without pride to the same performance. The results showed further that expressing pride in a performance communicated that the performance was near one's performance potential—the best one could perform. Consequently, given the same performance (e.g., the

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same exam score, placement in a competition), people believed that the person who expressed pride in their performance was less capable than the one who did not.

Overall, this research reveals that what expressing pride communicates to others isn't based solely on one's emotions but on others' emotional responses to similar successes. This nuanced perspective is particularly important for studying emotions in organizational contexts—be it professional, educational, or athletic organizational settings—for two key reasons. First, these are contexts in which people are keenly interested in managing impressions of their competence and skills (Bolino et al., 2016). Second, these are contexts in which varied emotional responses to the same success is likely because these are contexts that involve people from diverse backgrounds, who may have different ideas of what constitutes a pride-worthy achievement, doing and achieving similar things (e.g., Huguet et al., 2009). Thus, it is critical to know how heterogeneity in people's emotional responses to a performance affects the information conveyed by these emotions.

This research makes an essential contribution to the study of emotions and impression management in organizational contexts, particularly regarding how emotional expressions affect inferences about a person's competence (Gaertig et al., 2019; Tiedens, 2001; Wolf et al., 2016). Judgments of a person's competence form quickly and have enduring effects (Chen et al., 2014; Todorov et al., 2005). Understanding the factors that influence these judgments is critical because these impressions are associated with greater status, influence, and access to resources (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Van Vugt, 2006). Moreover, perceptions of one's competence is one of the strongest predictors of leadership at work (Lord et al., 1984).

This work shows that expressing pride does not inherently signal that one is capable and status-worthy. Previous research has indicated that pride is a positive status signal, implying that expressing pride should positively influence inferences about one's competence (Tracy et al., 2013, 2020). However, this work reveals that the effectiveness of expressing pride in managing impressions of competence hinges on others' emotional responses to similar successes. This is a critical insight for organizational scholars interested in the social information conveyed by emotions and for individuals who want to best manage impressions of their competence at work.

This research also contributes to the work on sharing successes with others, known as capitalization (Ilies et al., 2024), by uncovering a possible barrier that blocks people from sharing what they are proud of. Previous research on this topic has shown that sharing pride-relevant experiences is beneficial, but not costless (Watkins, 2021). It can make others jealous and incite social undermining (Lange & Crusius, 2015; Watkins, 2021). It might also make one seem arrogant or unlikable (Schmader et al., 2017; van Osch et al., 2019). These identified costs arise from the assumption that sharing successes implies that one is superior or highly competent. This work challenges that assumption by revealing diminished impressions of one's abilities or job proficiency as another possible cost of sharing one's pride with others. Moreover, this research reveals that people are worried about this cost. Identifying this worry is important for understanding how to encourage capitalization. Previous research suggests that organizations can encourage capitalization by addressing concerns about likability or making others feel bad at their jobs (Ilies et al., 2024). This work shows that there are times in which it may be necessary to manage the (justified) fear that sharing such experiences will make one seem worse at their job.

1. Theoretical Development

1.1. Divergent Emotional Responses to the Same Achievements

Success is not universally defined. People have different abilities, performance expectations, and reference points, so a performance that elicits pride in one person may not in another (Festinger, 1954; Marsh et al., 2008). For example, two colleagues may deliver successful presentations to the same client or two scholars may publish quality articles in the same journal, but these performances may elicit a different level of pride in each person.

People learn what constitutes an achievement from their local environment and relevant social comparisons (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003; Huguet et al., 2009; Ozmel & Guler, 2015), which means that people can feel bad about a performance if it ranks poorly in their local environment, even if it ranks well in absolute terms. People can also feel successful if their performance ranks well locally, even if it ranks poorly globally. Consider two students who have the same academic performance. One student is a high-performing student at a low-performing school. The other student is a poor-performing student at a high-performing school. The high-performing student at the low-performing school has been found to feel more successful than the low-performing student at the high-performing school (Huguet et al., 2009; Marsh, 1987).

This past work has shown that the same success can elicit different emotions in different people. These different emotional responses presumably also affect the information these emotions broadcast to others. I propose that this heterogeneity can fundamentally shift what expressing pride communicates about one's underlying abilities and competence. Specifically, I predict that expressing pride in a performance can signal that one is less competent when others react to the same performance without pride because expressing pride signals that a performance is closer to one's performance potential.

1.2. Pride Signals One's Performance Potential

Social functionalist accounts of pride contend that the primary evolved function of pride is to communicate one's achievements to others (Tracy et al., 2013). Supporting this account, people experience pride when they believe they have met or exceeded high-achievement standards (Tracy & Matsumoto, 2008). People display pride in response to their achievements, presumably to alert others of the accomplishment and their belief that they deserve higher status (Tracy & Matsumoto, 2008).

According to the Emotions-As-Social-Information (EASI) model (Van Kleef, 2009), a critical way that emotional expressions influence observers' behavior is by activating inferential processes. This model holds that emotions convey critical information to observers beyond what someone is feeling, and that people rely on someone's emotional expressions when judging the person and the surrounding situation. For instance, negotiators infer from their counterpart's anger not merely that their counterpart is angry but that they dislike an offer (Van Kleef et al., 2004). People infer from observing an audience express awe at a performance not just their emotional state but that the performance was exceptional (Hareli et al., 2018). People infer from observing someone's emotional ambivalence not just their feelings of tension and conflict but that they are deliberative and submissive (Rothman, 2011). Critically, when people see someone express pride, they also infer the cause of this pride—that the person experienced a personal success, outperformed others, or possesses valued characteristics (Martens, 2023; Tracy et al., 2023).

When people learn that someone expressed pride in a performance, they can infer that the person experienced their performance as a high achievement (Martens & Tracy, 2013; Tracy & Matsumoto, 2008). If the person instead reacted without pride to this same performance, people may reasonably infer that the performance was rather unexceptional for the person. Thus, people may assume that a performance is closer to someone's performance potential—the highest they could possibly perform—when the person expresses pride in their performance than when they do not.

The inference that a performance was closer to someone's performance potential likely relates negatively to judgments of their competence when others respond without pride to the same performance. Imagine two real estate brokers who both had $2 million in sales volume

last quarter. One realtor feels proud of these numbers, while the other does not. Observers may see the performance as a high achievement for the realtor who feels proud but a more standard affair for the one who does not. They may then reasonably assume that the performance (e.g., a sales volume of $2 million) is closer to the proud broker's performance potential than the non-proud broker's performance potential. Thus, given the same performance, people will think that the person who expresses pride in the performance is less competent than the person who does not. Thus, I predict the following:

Hypothesis 1: Expressing pride in a performance signals that someone is less competent when others react to the same performance without pride.
Hypothesis 2: Expressing pride in a performance signals that the performance was closer to one's performance potential.
Hypothesis 3: Inferences about one's performance potential mediate the negative effect of expressing pride in a performance on judgments of competence when others react to the same performance without pride.

1.3. Reconciling the Current Predictions with Past Findings on What Pride Signals to Others

The current predictions aver that heterogeneity in people's emotional responses to the same performance is a critical contextual factor for determining the inferences people make from others' pride expressions. Previous research on pride has not examined this critical contextual factor because of the questions about pride it has asked (see Tracy et al., 2023 and Table S1 in the SOM for reviews). For instance, this past work has sought to know what pride signals about how well someone has performed, so it has not held constant the performance about which someone feels proud (e.g., Martens & Tracy, 2013; Tracy & Matsumoto, 2008). This past work also has sought to identify what nonverbal expressions of pride signal in general, without the context for the feelings of pride (Martens & Tracy, 2013; Shariff et al., 2012; Shariff & Tracy, 2009).

However, the context surrounding someone's emotional expression can shift the inferences people make from that expression. This idea that situational factors affect the inferences people draw from others' emotional expressions is central to the EASI model. For instance, this model holds that inferences can vary by the relative competitiveness or cooperativeness of the situation, the epistemic motivation of the observers, or the prevailing norms of the situation (see Van Kleef & Côté, 2022). I contend that heterogeneity in people's emotional responses to the same event is another contextual factor that shifts the inferences people infer from someone's emotional expressions.

In a context in which people do not know that two people have performed the same, pride likely signals that one has performed well or better than others. Consider again the two real estate brokers' emotional responses to their quarterly sales volume. However, now imagine not knowing the brokers' sales volume, only knowing that one broker felt proud of their performance and the other did not. An observer may reasonably assume that the proud broker performed better (e.g., had a sales volume of $2 million) than the not proud candidate (e.g., had a sales volume of $1 million). Thus, the observer may think the proud broker is more competent than the not proud one. That is, absent information that the two brokers reacted to the same performance, expressing pride likely signals that one is more competent because expressing pride signals that one performed better. This prediction is consistent with what previous research has repeatedly found (see Tracy et al., 2023 and Table S1 in the SOM for reviews).

Hypotheses 4. When observers lack information that two people have performed the same, they will judge the person who expresses pride to be more competent than the one who does not. When observers know that two people have performed the same, they will judge the person who expresses pride to be less competent than the one who does not.

The current theory suggests that people infer that a performance is closer to the best someone could perform (i.e., their performance potential) when they express pride in their performance than when they do not. People may make this inference regardless of whether they have information about others' emotional responses to the same performance. However, when people do not know that people have performed the same, this inference may not matter for judgments of the person's competence because the inferred baseline performances vary.

When observers do not know that two people have performed the same, they likely assume that someone performed better when they feel proud of their performance than when they do not, as previous research on pride suggests (see Table S1 in the SOM for a summary). Observers may still think that the proud person's performance (e.g., had a sales volume of $2 million) is closer to their performance potential than the performance is to the not proud person's performance potential (e.g., had a sales volume of $1 million). However, because people infer that the proud person has a higher baseline performance than the not proud person, this inference about their performance potential may matter less for judgments of the person's competence. What matters instead is the inferred baseline performance.

Hypothesis 5: The negative association between the perception that a performance is close to one's performance potential and judgments of competence is stronger when people have information that others have not expressed pride in the same performance than when they lack this information.

1.4. Overview of Studies

Fig. 1 summarizes the predictions and Table 1 describes each study and its purpose. I first conducted two pilot studies to see whether people recall instances of judging someone to be less competent at work for expressing pride in a performance and whether people are concerned about being seen as less competent at work for expressing pride in a performance. I then conducted nine experiments (seven reported in the main text and two in the SOM) that manipulated people's emotional reactions to a performance and assessed what observers inferred about their competence.

All the studies were preregistered. Each study reports all manipulations, measures, and exclusions. The materials, preregistrations, and data are posted to the Open Science Framework: https://osf.io/d5hn4/?view_only=cadd8b2a098044a897eedbf58d31a6fb.

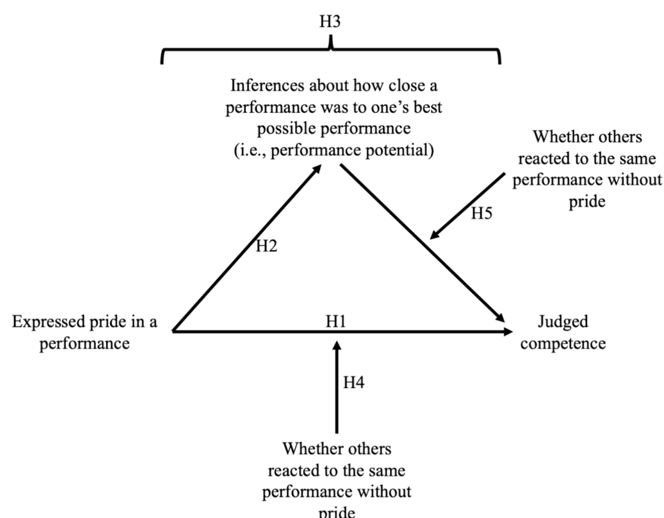

Fig. 1. Model Summarizing Predictions.

Table 1
Description of Each Study.

Study	Manipulation(s)	Design	How the emotion expression was manipulated	Main dependent variable(s)	Hypoth-esis(es) tested	Additional objectives of the study
1	Manipulated two bridge players' emotional responses to the same bridge performance. One player expressed pride in the performance. One player did not.	Two cell, within-subjects design	Verbal description of the players' emotional reactions to their performance.	Which player is the better bridge player?	1	Address whether the findings emerge in a sample of participants for whom the context is highly relevant.
2	Manipulated two programmers' emotional responses to the same performance at a computer programming tournament. One player expressed pride in the performance. One player did not.	Two cell, within-subjects design	Verbal description of the programmers' emotional reactions to their performance.	Which player is the better competitive programmer?	1	Address whether differences in likability account for the findings.
3	Manipulated students' nonverbal emotional reactions to their esports performance.	Two cell, between-subjects design	Short videos showing the targets' nonverbal emotional reactions to their performance.	Who participants hired to play an esports game on their behalf (incentivized).	1	Test whether the findings generalize to incentivized choice.
4	Manipulated students' nonverbal emotional reactions to their scores on a logic and inferences test.	Two cell, between-subjects design	Short videos showing the targets' nonverbal emotional reactions to their performance.	Who participants hired for a position to help others on a logic and inferences task (incentivized).	1	Assess whether the findings of Study 3 generalize to a different context.
S1	Manipulated new hires' nonverbal emotional reactions to a job aptitude test to assess their logic and inferences abilities.	Two cell, between-subjects design	Short videos showing the targets' nonverbal emotional reactions to their performance.	Who participants thought was the better employee and ratings of how much status at work the employees should have.	1	Address whether the findings from Studies 3 and 4 generalize to an assessment of the target's job-related status conferral.
5a	Manipulated whether employees felt proud or not proud of a performance and whether it was specified that the employees performed the same.	2 (Emotion: Felt proud, Did not feel proud of a performance) x 2 (Same performance: Specified, Unspecified) mixed-design.	Verbal description of the employees' emotional reactions to their performance.	Ratings of the employees' work-related competence.	1,4	Address whether differences in perceived arrogance or likability account for the findings.
5b	Manipulated whether employees felt proud or ashamed of a performance and whether it was specified that the employees performed the same.	2 (Emotion: Felt proud, Felt ashamed) x 2 (Same performance: Specified, Unspecified) mixed-design.	Verbal description of the employees' emotional reactions to their performance.	Ratings of the employees' work-related competence.	1,4	Address whether differences in perceived arrogance or likability account for the findings. Address whether the findings are driven by reacting emotionally to one's performance.
6	Manipulated employees' nonverbal emotional reactions to their job aptitude test and whether it was specified that the employees performed the same.	2 (Emotion: Reacted proudly, Reacted neutrally) x 2 (Same performance: Specified, Unspecified) between-subjects design	Short videos showing the employees' nonverbal emotional reactions to their performance.	1. Which new hire has stronger job-related skills. 2. Judgements of how close the new hires' scores are to their performance potential. 3. Inferences about the new hires' scores.	1–5	Ensure that the moderation by whether the performance is specified generalizes to a different manipulation of pride.
S2	Manipulated employees' nonverbal emotional reactions to their job aptitude test and whether it was specified that the employees performed the same.	2 (Emotion: Reacted proudly, Reacted neutrally) x 2 (Same performance: Specified, Unspecified) between-subjects design	Verbal description of the employees' emotional reactions to their performance.	Which new hire has stronger job-related skills.	1, 4	Ensure the findings from Study 6 replicate using a different manipulation of pride.

Except for the pilot studies and Study 1, the sample sizes were determined in one of two ways: the number of participants that the study would need to have at least 90 % power to detect the predicted effect or by preregistered sequential sampling (Lakens, 2014). Except for Study 1, all participants were U.S. adults recruited from Mechanical Turk or Prolific Academic. Participants did not report individual-level demographic data; rather, demographic data were collected at the sample level. The gender composition of each study ranged from 55 % to 42 % male.

As shown in Table 1, I varied the contexts and assessments of competence across studies to ensure that the results are not specific to one domain or assessment. The performance contexts are relevant to the theory because they are contexts in which heterogeneous responses to the same performance could occur and in which judgments of a person's skills and abilities are relevant and important.

1.5. Pilot Studies

I began by investigating the relevance of the proposed phenomenon in people's everyday work lives. I conducted a preregistered survey of 200 working adults from Prolific academic about witnessing other people expressing pride at work. I asked them: "Can you think of a time when someone expressing pride about something they did at work or school made this person seem less skilled, less competent, or not as good at their job?" Sixty-one percent of respondents said they had.

I conducted another preregistered survey with a separate group of 200 working adults from Prolific academic about concealing their pride from others at work. I gave them two examples of people feeling proud at work but not sharing this with others. I then asked participants, "Have you ever experienced something like this at work or at school? where you felt proud of something you did at work, but you didn't tell people this thing made you proud?" Eighty-eight percent of respondents said

"Yes." I gave people a variety of different reasons for why they might have concealed their pride at work including, "People might think I was bragging," "People might think I am not so good at my job/school," and "Other people would not feel proud of this." participants could select all the reasons that applied. People identified different reasons, with 38% of respondents indicating they concealed their pride because they did not want to be seen as bragging or making other people feel bad. Notably, 24.7% of respondents indicated that they concealed their pride because they were concerned others would judge them as less competent or good at their job if they shared this experience, and another 20% indicated that they concealed their pride because other people would not feel proud of the same achievement. The SOM contains the full details of these two pilot studies.

2. Discussion

The majority of people in these pilot studies indicated having judged others as less competent for expressing pride at work, and about a quarter of people reported fearing this judgment, leading them to conceal their feelings of pride at work. These findings demonstrate that pride signaling lower competence to others is a frequent phenomenon and a concern for people at work. Given that existing research points only to the opposite—that expressing pride leads to judgments of greater competence and concerns of appearing too competent (see Martens et al., 2012; Tracy et al., 2023)—the results of these pilot studies show why it is critical to identify when and why the opposite occurs.

3. Study 1: Who Is the Better Bridge Player?

In Study 1, tournament bridge players read about two other bridge players and said which player they thought was the better bridge player. Bridge is a four-player, trick-taking card game in which one pair of players competes against another pair. Bridge is popular worldwide, with millions of people competing in local clubs, online, and at tournaments.

3.1. Methods

3.1.1. Participants

Tournament bridge players were recruited through contacts in local bridge clubs and a listserv of bridge players. Two hundred and eleven participants completed the study. No participants were excluded and no demographic data were collected.

3.1.2. Procedure

The following short scenario was crafted in collaboration with a veteran bridge player to ensure the scenario's realism to the participant population.

> Two players, who have been playing tournament bridge for the same time, got matched up at a partnership desk at a regional tournament. We will call them Player A and Player B. The two players decide to play in a two-session pair event together. They played well. They came in first overall in the morning event. They came in fifth overall in the evening event, finishing second overall in the combined event. Player A showed a lot of pride when the final scores were announced and told everyone at the tournament that he was "so proud" of his double session event. Player B was very composed and collected when the final scores were announced and didn't say anything about his double session event to other people at the tournament.

Participants then answered two questions about the scenario. They indicated whether they thought Player A or Player B was a better bridge player. They then reported which player's performance they would bet on during a fantasy-sport style event. Both questions were binary choice questions in which participants selected either Player A or Player B.

3.2. Results

For both dependent variables, a one-sample binomial test was run to compare the proportion of participants who selected the proud bridge player (Player A) versus the player who did not express pride (Player B). Eighty-nine percent of participants thought that the bridge player who expressed pride was a worse player than the one who did not ($p < 0.001$, two-tailed, Cohen's $g = 0.39$). Eighty-two percent of participants also reported that would be less likely to bet on the performance of the bridge player who expressed pride than the one who did not ($p < 0.001$, two-tailed, Cohen's $g = 0.32$).

3.3. Discussion

Study 1 supported the prediction that expressing pride in a performance signals that someone is less competent when another person reacts to the same performance without pride. A strength of Study 1 was the realism and relevance of the scenario to participants. However, there are features of the study that raise questions about alternative explanations for the findings. For instance, perhaps participants did not like the player who told others that he was proud of the pair's performance because they thought the person was arrogant or hubristic (Kalokerinos et al., 2014; Sezer et al., 2018).

Existing research distinguishes between two types of pride experiences: authentic and hubristic (Tracy & Robins, 2007a). Authentic pride arises more from feelings of accomplishment, confidence, and feelings of personal success. Hubristic pride is marked more by arrogance and conceit. This distinction primarily applies to individual differences in how people experience pride (see Tracy et al., 2020 for a review). Indeed, research on pride expressions shows that people do not readily distinguish these two forms of pride when observing people express pride (Tracy & Robins, 2007b). Moreover, people tend to perceive nonverbal expressions of pride as more authentic than hubristic (Schmader et al., 2017; Tracy et al., 2020; Tracy & Prehn, 2012), unless they are told that the pride expresser makes stable internal attributions for their success (Tracy & Prehn, 2012). Additionally, previous research finds that both authentic and hubristic pride relate to higher status, just through different routes, with authentic pride relating to prestige and hubristic pride relating to dominance (Cheng et al., 2010; Tracy et al., 2020).

Given that people tend to associate both prestige and dominance with higher competence (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Cheng et al., 2010), it is unlikely that this distinction would account for the proposed effects of pride. Nevertheless, I addressed this possibility by measuring likability (in Studies 2, 5a, and 5b) and arrogance (in Studies 5a and 5b). In these studies, I found people think someone is less competent, but more likable and less arrogant when they express pride in a performance that others do not. I also found that neither perceived liking nor arrogance explained the observed effects of expressing pride in a performance on perceived competence.

4. Study 2: Who Is the Better Computer Programmer?

Participants indicated which of two computer programmers was the better programmer based on how the competitors reacted to winning a competitive programming tournament. Competitive programming is a mind sport where people compete to solve coding problems related to algorithms, data structures, math, and logic. These tournaments serve as significant recruitment platforms for leading technology companies such as Facebook and Google, which organize their own competitions.

4.1. Methods

4.1.1. Participants

The study was posted on Mechanical Turk via CloudResearch for 300 U.S.-based adults. Following the preregistered exclusion plan, there

were 277 participants (see Table S2 for more details).

4.1.2. Procedure

Participants read about two competitive programmers who had competed individually in identical but separate tournaments. Both competitors earned an excellent score of 854 and won their respective tournaments. One competitor expressed pride in their performance; the other did not. Specifically, participants read:

> *Proud competitor's reaction to their performance*: Lydia looked so proud after she learned about her first-place score. When someone asked about her score, Lydia said she was "so proud of it!" The pride Lydia felt was evident even hours after the tournament when she was leaving the competition hall at the end of the event.
> *Not proud competitor's reaction to their performance*: Marta looked composed and reacted with little emotion after her first-place score was announced. When someone asked about her score, Marta said she felt ok about her performance but not that proud of her score.

After reading the scenario, participants indicated, in a randomized order, which competitor they thought was the better programmer as a binary choice and how unlikable or likable each competitor seemed (1 = *very unlikable*; 5 = *very likable*).

I randomized whether participants read and answered questions about the proud competitor or not-proud competitor first and the names associated with the two competitors. I also randomized whether participants read about two male or two female programmers for stimulus-sampling purposes.

4.2. Results

Participants selected the proud competitor as the better programmer 29.6% of the time and the not proud competitor 70.4% of the time. A one-sample binomial test showed that the proportion of participants who selected the proud competitor versus the competitor who was not proud differed significantly ($p < 0.001$, Cohen's $g = 0.20$).

Counter to the idea that people just form negative impressions of someone who expresses pride when others do not, a paired-samples *t*-test showed that participants thought that the proud competitor was more likable ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.73$) than the not proud competitor ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 0.94$), $t(276) = 15.29$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.92$.

4.2.0.1. Sensitivity and Exploratory Analyses

The negative effect of expressing pride in one's performance on who participants thought was the better programmer remained significant in an analysis that controlled for ratings of the competitors' likability (see the SOM). The gender of the competitors and the order in which participants read about the proud or not proud competitor did not significantly moderate the effects (see the SOM).

4.3. Discussion

Study 2 replicated Study 1. Participants thought that someone who expressed pride in winning a programming tournament was a worse programmer than someone who did not express pride in the same performance. One alternative explanation is that participants thought the person who expressed pride in their performance was hubristic or arrogant. People dislike these qualities (Sezer et al., 2018), so perhaps these negative impressions explain why people see the person who expresses pride as less competent. Counter to this explanation, on average, participants liked the programmer who expressed pride in their performance more than the programmer who did not express pride in the same performance, and this difference in liking did not account for participants' choice about who was the better programmer. People may interpret some expressions of pride as hubristic, and they may have done so in Study 1. Nevertheless, the effects do not appear to be driven by the likability of the targets. Studies 5a and 5b address this issue further.

5. Study 3: Which Person Do You Want to Hire?

Study 3 was an incentivized hiring study. Participants selected one of two people to play an online basketball shooting game on their behalf.

5.1. Methods

5.1.1. Participants

The study was posted on Mechanical Turk for 400 U.S.-based adult participants. After applying the preregistered exclusion criteria, the final sample was 385 (see Table S2 in the SOM for more details).

5.1.2. Procedure

Participants had to hire one of two college students to complete an e-basketball challenge on their behalf. Participants would be paid $0.01 for every shot the hired player made during the 45-second game.

Participants learned that the two potential hires both made 23 shots when they competed in a similar online basketball shooting game as part of an online study. Participants viewed a short, audio-less video of the two players' nonverbal emotional reactions to their performance. Candidate A always reacted neutrally. Candidate B either reacted neutrally or proudly to their performance.

Participants were assigned to one of these two reactions from Candidate B. The SOM contains information about how the videos were created and pilot tested.

Participants selected which of the two candidates they wanted to hire to play the game on their behalf. This choice was the dependent variable.[1] Because different actors played Candidates A and B, participants may have preferred one actor over the other. Therefore, no predictions were made about the absolute rate of choosing Candidate B. The key test was whether participants' preference for hiring Candidate B depended on his expression of pride.

Participants concluded the study by indicating which candidate expressed more pride about their performance: 1) *Candidate A expressed more pride*; 2) *Candidate B expressed more pride*; or 3) *Candidate A and B had the same emotional expression.*

5.2. Results

5.2.1. Manipulation Check

When Candidate B reacted proudly to his performance, 96.4% of participants reported that he expressed more pride than Candidate A. When Candidate B had a neutral reaction, 32.1% of participants said that he expressed more pride. Thus, the manipulation of Candidate B's expression of pride was effective, $\chi^2(2) = 176.85$, $p < 0.001$, $\varphi = 0.68$.

5.2.2. Main Analysis

Candidate A always reacted neutrally to his performance, while Candidate B reacted neutrally or proudly. The dependent variable was the percentage of participants who hired Candidate B. When Candidate B reacted neutrally to his performance, participants chose him 57.5% of the time. When Candidate B reacted proudly to his performance, participants chose him 46.4% of the time. This difference was significant, $\chi^2(1) = 4.80$, $p = 0.028$, $\varphi = 0.13$.

5.3. Discussion

Study 3 further supported the prediction that expressing pride in a performance makes someone seem less competent when someone else reacts without pride to the same performance. Participants were less

[1] Six research assistants played the game to determine participants' payout. Candidate A and Candidate B's performances were yoked to the performance of the two top players in a shooting competition. Participants were paid the appropriate bonus after the study.

likely to hire someone to perform a task on their behalf when the person expressed pride in their performance than when they did not.

6. Study 4: Which Person Do You Want To Be the Task Leader?

Study 4 was a conceptual replication of Study 3, designed to ensure the findings generalize beyond Study 3′s videogame context. Participants selected one of two students to be a task leader, a role that came with the ability to help other people on the team solve problems (Gaertig et al., 2019; Halevy et al., 2012). The team's performance supposedly determined participants' bonus payments.

6.1. Methods

6.1.1. Participants

The study was posted on Mechanical Turk for 726 U.S.-based adult participants. After applying the preregistered exclusions, the final sample was $N = 666$.

6.1.2. Procedure

The study had a two-condition between-subjects design. All participants saw two people react to the same performance. I manipulated between-subjects whether the two people both reacted neutrally or one of them reacted proudly to the performance.

Participants completed a managerial simulation in which they had to select one of two possible students to be the task leader for a logic an inferences task. The simulation was designed to incentivize participants to select the person who they thought was more competent at the task. Participants would earn a bonus of $0.02 for every point the team scored for a maximum bonus of $0.72 (the maximum possible score was 36). Participants learned that the team leader could help the other team members solve the problems.

Participants learned the candidates had performed the same on a similar logic and inference task during a previous study, solving seven problems in 16 min. Participants then saw a silent video clip of the way the candidates supposedly reacted when they learned they had scored a seven on the exam. Similar to Study 3, I hired actors to nonverbally react proudly or neutrally to a performance. Candidate A always reacted neutrally to his score, while Candidate B reacted proudly or neutrally to his score. Participants were assigned randomly to one of these two reactions. Pilot testing showed that the videos conveyed the intended emotional reaction (see the SOM for more details).

Participants selected which candidate should be the task leader. After making their choice, they learned that the research team would contact them within one week with details of the team's score and participants' bonus. Because the team was fictitious, all participants received the maximum possible bonus of $0.72.

Participants concluded the study by answering a manipulation-check question. They viewed the reactions of Candidate A and Candidate B again, and for each candidate, participants indicated how much pride the candidate expressed about his performance (1 = *no pride*; 5 = *an extreme amount of pride*).

6.2. Results

6.2.1. Manipulation Check

The manipulation check results are reported in detail in the SOM. In brief, as intended, participants thought that Candidate B felt prouder of his score when he expressed pride than when he did not. Participants also thought that Candidate B was prouder of his score than Candidate A when Candidate B expressed pride. However, the manipulation also affected the perceptions of Candidate A's pride. The analyses were run both controlling and not controlling for the ratings of Candidate A's feelings of pride. The results remained the same, suggesting that these differences did not account for the results.

6.2.2. Main Analysis

The dependent variable was the percentage of participants who selected Candidate B as the task leader. Candidate A always reacted neutrally to his performance, while Candidate B either reacted neutrally or proudly to the same performance. Different actors played Candidates A and B. Participants may have preferred one actor over another. Thus, no predictions were made about the absolute rate at which Candidate B was chosen. Thus, the key test was whether participants' likelihood of selecting Candidate B as the task leader depended on whether Candidate B reacted proudly to his score. The results showed this to be the case. Participants selected Candidate B as the task leader 69% of the time when he reacted neutrally to his score, but only 44% when he reacted proudly to his score, χ^2 (1) = 43.34, $p < 0.001$, $\varphi = 0.25$.

6.3. Discussion

Study 4 showed that expressing pride in a performance on a task when someone else did not reduced the likelihood of being chosen to lead others on a similar task. Study S1 replicated these findings in a different context and measuring judgments of competence for both targets to show that the results generalize to different ways of assessing task-specific competence.

Previous research on pride has found that pride signals competence, success, and status (see Tracy et al., 2020 for a review). The next studies (Studies 5a and 5b) were designed to reconcile these findings with this past work on pride. These studies tested the prediction that the effect of a person expressing pride in their performance on judgments of their competence depends on whether people know that others have reacted without pride to the same performance.

One concern could be that specifying that the two people performed the same shifts whether people see the person's expression of pride as more or less hubristic, and that these shifts account for the effects of expressing pride in a performance on perceived competence. I measured perceptions of the target's arrogance and likability in Studies 5a and 5b to address this concern. I preregistered that I would analyze the effects on arrogance and liking, but I made no specific predictions about the nature of these effects.

Another alternative explanation is that the effects are not due to reacting proudly but to not showing emotion. Perceived emotionality has been associated with lower perceived agency and thus may be a cue of lower competence (Wang et al., 2016). I addressed this alternative explanation in Study 5b by comparing feeling proud of a performance to feeling ashamed of it. Shame, like pride, is a self-conscious emotion that is central to status-management (Sznycer & Cohen, 2021). The "not showing emotion" account would suggest that showing shame or expressing pride would have similar effects. Expressing shame might even be worse because shame is a negative emotion that people are socialized not to express (Tracy & Matsumoto, 2008). I expected that participants would think the proud employee was less competent than the ashamed employee when participants learned that the two employees performed the same because shame communicates the opposite of pride—that someone felt they did not meet expectations. However, in line with previous research showing that expressions of shame are associated with lower status (Martens et al., 2012), I expected participants to perceive the ashamed employee as less competent than the proud employee when they did not learn that the employees performed the same.

7. Studies 5a and 5b: Who Is the More Competent (Arrogant and Likable) Employee?

Participants saw two employees react to their own performance and then rated the employees' competence, arrogance, and likability. I varied both the employees' emotional reaction to the performance and whether the employees performed the same.

7.1. Method

7.1.1. Participants

Both studies were posted to Prolific Academic for 400 U.S.-based adult participants. After applying the preregistered exclusion plan, the final sample was $N = 374$ for Study 5a and $N = 384$ for Study 5b (see Table S2 in the SOM for more details).

7.1.2. Procedure

In both studies, participants read about two employees who both work as content creators. The employees receive their engagement numbers each month as a measure of their performance. All participants learned one employee felt proud of their last month's engagement numbers. Participants learned the other employee did not feel proud of (Study 5a) or was ashamed (Study 5b) of their engagement numbers. I randomly assigned participants to learn or not learn that the employees had the same engagement numbers, meaning they performed the same.

Participants then answered three questions about their impressions of each employee's job-specific competence: (1) "[Name] is highly competent at her job," (2) "[Name] is highly skilled at her job," and (3) "[Name] is a star performer at her job." They answered two questions about the employees' arrogance: (1) "[Name] is arrogant," and (2) "[Name] is boastful." They answered one question about the employees' likability: "[Name] is likable." The Cronbach's alphas for each variable are reported in the SOM.

Additional Randomization and Stimulus-Sampling. Participants answered the questions about competence in one block. They answered the questions about arrogance and likability in another block. The order of the two blocks was randomized. The order in which participants answered questions about the two employees was also randomized. For stimulus-sampling purposes, participants read about two male or two female employees, and the names of the employees were sampled from a bank of names. No predictions were made about the gender or names of the employees, and the preregistered analysis collapsed across these variables.

7.2. Results

7.2.1. Analysis

I ran a linear mixed model in which each dependent variable (i.e., competence, arrogance, and likability) was regressed on the emotion the employee felt about their performance (proud vs. not proud/ashamed), whether it was specified that the employees performed the same (specified vs. not specified), and the interaction between these two variables. This interaction was significant for competence, arrogance, and likability in both studies 5a and 5b (see Tables 2 and 3)

7.2.2. Competence

As predicted, and depicted in Fig. 2 Panel A, in Study 5a there was a significant Emotion x Same performance specified interaction for competence (see Table 2, Model 2). When it was not specified that the employees performed the same, participants thought the proud employee was more competent at their job than the not proud employee (see Table 2, Model 2). However, when it was specified that the two employees performed the same, participants thought the proud employee was less competent than the not proud employee (see Table 2, Model 4). In a sensitivity analysis, these effects remained the same when controlling for impressions of the employees' arrogance and likability (see Table 2, Models 3 and 5). The results were the same in Study 5b (see Table 2, Models 6-10, and Fig. 2 Panel B.

7.2.3. Arrogance

When it was not specified that the employees performed the same, participants thought the employee who felt proud was more arrogant than the employee who did not feel proud (see Table 3, Model 1). The opposite was the case when it was specified that the employees performed the same (see Table 3, Model 2). The same pattern emerged in Study 5b (see Table 3, Model 3 and Model 4).

7.2.4. Liking

In Study 5a, when it was unspecified that the employees performed the same, whether the employee expressed pride in their performance had no significant effect on liking (see Table 3, Model 3). However, when it was specified that the employees performed the same, participants liked the employee who expressed pride more than the employee who did not, replicating Study 2 (see Table 3, Model 4).

The results for liking in Study 5b were different. When it was not specified that the employees performed the same, participants liked the employee who felt proud more than the one who felt ashamed (see Table 3, Model 7). When it was specified that the performance was the same, there was no significant effect of whether the employee felt proud or ashamed on likability (see Table 3, Model 8).

7.3. Discussion

Studies 5a and 5b showed that what expressing pride in a performance communicates about one's competence depends on others' emotional reactions to the same performance. When participants did not know that two employees performed the same, they thought the employee who felt proud of their performance was more competent than

Table 2
Regression Results Predicting Judgments of Competence.

	Study 5a					Study 5b				
Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Emotion	0.29**	0.84**	0.81**	−0.31**	−0.45**	0.33**	0.83**	0.91**	−0.19**	−0.31**
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Same performance (SP)	0.25**	0.83**	0.87**	−0.83**	−0.87**	0.16*	0.67**	0.834**	−0.67**	−0.83**
	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Emotion X SP		−1.15**	−1.26**	1.15**	1.26**		−1.02**	−1.22**	1.02**	1.22**
		(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.09)		(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.09)
Arrogance			0.02		0.02			−0.28**		−0.28**
			(0.03)		(0.03)			(0.02)		(0.02)
Likable			0.30**		0.30**			0.15**		0.15**
			(0.03)		(0.03)			(0.03)		(0.03)
Constant	3.27**	3.00**	1.96**	3.83**	2.83**	2.93*	2.66**	2.92**	3.35**	3.76**
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.14)	(0.05)	(0.15)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.11)	(0.06)	(0.13)

Note. Emotion scored as 0 = *Did not feel proud* (Study 5a)/*felt ashamed* (Study 5b), 1 = *Felt proud*. Same performance scored as 0 = *Same performance unspecified*; 1 = *Same performance specified*. Models 2, 3, 7, 8 show the effect of Emotion in the Same performance unspecified condition. Models 4, 5, 9, 10 show the effect of Emotion in the Same performance specified condition. Standard errors are in parentheses. Results are from linear mixed model with competence ratings nested in participant. $^{**}p < 0.01$ $^{*}p < 0.05$.

Table 3
Regression Results Predicting Judgments of Arrogance and Likability (Studies 5a and 5b).

	Study 5a				Study 5b			
	DV: Arrogant		DV: Likable		DV: Arrogant		DV: Likable	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Emotion	0.55**	−0.37**	0.06	0.48**	0.65**	−0.36**	0.66**	0.13
	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Same performance (SP)	0.59**	−0.59**	−0.18*	0.18*	0.86**	−0.86**	0.54**	−0.54**
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Emotion x SP	−0.91**	0.91**	0.43**	−0.43**	−1.01**	1.01**	−0.53**	0.53**
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Constant	1.95**	2.53**	3.34**	3.16**	2.44**	3.31**	2.94**	3.48**
	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.06)	(0.06)

Note. Emotion scored as 0 = *Did not feel proud* (Study 5a)/*felt ashamed* (Study 5b), 1 = *Felt proud*. Same performance scored as 0 = *Same performance unspecified*; 1 = *Same performance specified*. Models 1, 3, 5, 7 show the effect of Emotion in the Same performance unspecified condition. Models 2, 4, 6, 8 show the effect of Emotion in the Same performance specified condition. Standard errors are in parentheses. Results are from linear mixed model with arrogance and likability ratings nested in participant.
** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$.

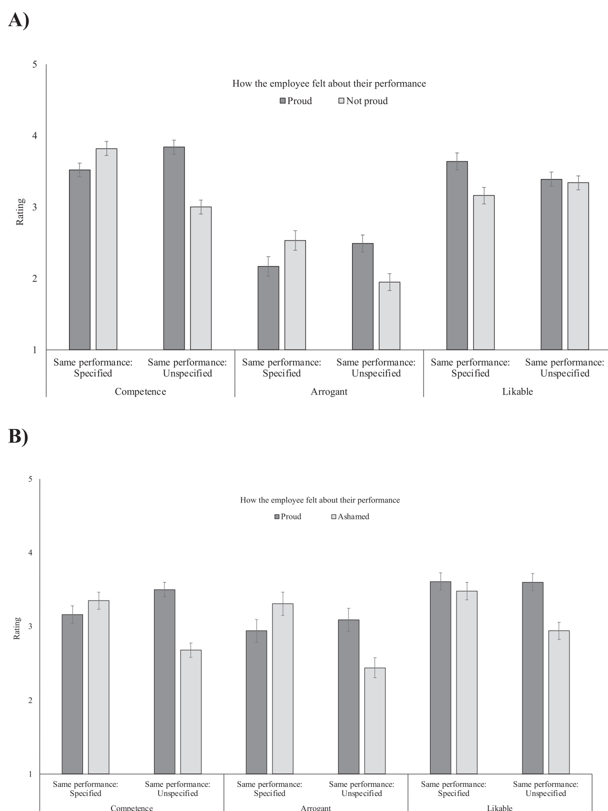

Fig. 2. The Effect of Employees' Emotional Reactions to their Performance on Ratings of Their Competence, Arrogance, and Likability (Studies 5a and 5b). *Note.* Panel A and Panel B shows the results from Study 5a and Study 5b, respectively. Error bars are the 95% CI.

the employee who did not feel proud or who felt ashamed of their performance. This finding aligns with previous research on the social function of pride. However, in line with the current predictions, when participants learned the employees performed the same, they thought the employee who expressed pride was less competent than the employee who did not express pride or expressed shame.

Studies 5a and 5b further showed that what pride communicates about a person's arrogance and likability also depends on whether others reacted without pride to the same performance. Expressing pride made someone seem less arrogant when people learned that someone else reacted without pride to the same performance, but more arrogant when people did not learn this. Whether it was specified that the employees were reacting to the same performance also shifted the effect of expressing pride on likability. But here the effects also seemed to depend on whether the other person reacted without pride or shamefully to the performance. Importantly, these effects on perceived arrogance and liking did not account for the effects of expressing pride on perceived competence, minimizing the concern that the effects are due to people thinking the proud person is hubristic and unlikable.

8. Study 6: Who Is the Better Data Analyst and Computer Programmer?

The purpose of Study 6 was to test all five hypotheses in one study. Participants engaged in a managerial scenario. All participants saw how two people supposedly nonverbally reacted to receiving their scores on a job aptitude test. Participants either did or did not know that the employees received the same score. Participants estimated the employees' score on the exam and how well the employees could possibly perform on the exam (i.e., their performance potential). Then, participants indicated which employee they thought was more competent.

This measure of performance potential allowed me to test the prediction that expressing pride in a performance signals that the performance was closer to one's performance potential (Hypothesis 2), and that this inference mediates the negative effect of expressing pride in a performance when others react to the same performance without pride (Hypothesis 3). It also allowed me to test whether the negative association between the perception that a performance is close to one's performance potential and judgments of competence is stronger when people have information that others have not expressed pride in the same performance than when they lack this information (Hypothesis 5).

8.1. Methods

8.1.1. Participants

The study was posted Prolific Academic for 600 U.S.-based adult participants. After following the preregistered exclusion criteria, the final sample size was 582 (see Table S2 in the SOM for more details).

8.1.2. Procedure

The study had a 2 (Same performance specified: Yes, No) x 2 (Employee's emotional reaction to their performance: Employee expressed pride in their score; Employee did not express pride in their score) between-subjects design.

Participants simulated being a manager in which they made judgments about two employees who recently completed an aptitude test to assess their logic and inference ability, critical skills for their job success.

Participants were informed that the scores corresponded to different performance levels (e.g., scores of 15–19 are above average, scores of 20 are excellent).

Manipulation of Whether the Employees Performed the Same. In the "Same performance: Specified" condition, participants read: "Employee A and Employee B *earned the same score* on the aptitude test to assess their logic and inference abilities." In the "Same performance: Unspecified" condition, participants did not receive the information that the employees had the same score.

Manipulation of the Employees' Emotional Reactions to Their Performance. The study manipulated the employees' emotional reactions in the same way as in Study 4, using the short videos depicting the employees' nonverbal emotional reactions. Employee A always reacted neutrally to his score, while Employee B either reacted neutrally or proudly to his score. Participants were assigned randomly to one of these two reactions from Employee B.

Perceived Performance. Participants indicated how well they thought that the two employees performed. In the "Same performance: Specified" condition, they answered one question about the employees' scores because they knew the employees had the same score: "*What do you think Employee A and Employee B scored on the test?*" Participants answered this question on a scale that ranged from "0" to "more than 20." Participants in the "Same performance: Unspecified" condition estimated Employee A's score and then Employee B's score separately.

Performance Potential. Participants were asked "*Is a score of [] near the employee's potential, or do you think they could perform much better than this in the future?*" Participants selected from four responses: 1) *They could not score higher than [] in the future*; 2) *They could score a little higher than [] in the future*; 3) *They could score somewhat higher than [] in the future*; 4) *They could score much higher than [] in the future*. Participants' answers to the perceived performance question determined the score piped into the parentheses. For instance, if someone thought Employee B scored a 15, then they would be asked whether a score of 15 is near Employee B's potential. Participants answered the question for both Employee A and Employee B.

Competence. Participants then answered a binary choice question about whether they thought Employee A or B had greater logic and inference abilities.

Manipulation Check. Participants concluded the study by answering a manipulation-check question. They viewed the reactions of Candidate A and Candidate B again, and for each candidate, participants indicated how much pride the candidate expressed about his performance (1 = *no pride*; 5 = *an extreme amount of pride*).

8.2. Results

8.2.1. Manipulation Check

The SOM contains the full details of the manipulation check results. In brief, participants thought that Employee B was prouder of his score when he expressed pride than when he did not. They also thought that Employee B was prouder of his score than Employee A when he expressed pride than when he did not. As a robustness check, the findings remained the same when all the analyses were run controlling for ratings of Employee A's pride and the interaction between Employee A's pride and whether it was specified that the employees performed the same.

8.2.2. Hypothesis Testing

Linear regression models were used to test each of the predicted effects. Table 4 reports the results.

Competence. Hypothesis 4 predicts that expressing pride in one's performance will have a negative effect on judgments of a person's competence when someone else reacts without pride to the same performance (*Same performance: Specified condition*), but a positive effect when there is no information about this (*Same performance: Unspecified condition*). As shown in Table 4, Model 1, the interaction between Employee B's emotional reaction and whether the performance was specified was significant (see Fig. 3).

In the "Same performance: Specified" condition, when participants learned that Employees A and B received the same score, they were less likely to believe that Employee B was the better employee when he expressed pride than when he did not (Table 4, Model 1). However, in the "Same performance: Unspecified" condition, when participants did

Table 4
Results of Linear Regression Models Predicting Judgments of Competence and How Close the Performance Was to the Employee's Performance Potential (Study 6).

	DV: Competence		DV: Near performance potential		DV: Competence	
Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Expressed pride	-.39**	.28**	.78**	.61**		
	(.05)	(.05)	(.09)	(.09)		
Same performance (SP)	.02	-.02	-.01	.01	-.48**	.48**
	(.06)	(.06)	(.09)	(.09)	(.10)	(.10)
Expressed pride x SP	.66**	-.66**	-.17	.17		
	(.07)	(.07)	(.13)	(.13)		
Near performance potential					-.30**	.02
					(.19)	(.03)
SP x Near performance potential					.32**	-.32**
					(.04)	(.04)
Constant	.56**	.58**	2.19**	2.19**	1.15**	.67**
	(.04)	(.04)	(.06)	(.07)	(.06)	(.08)
Observations	582	582	582	582	582	582
R-squared	.23	.23	.16	.16	.26	.26

Note. Results are from linear regression models. Models 1, 2, 5, & 6 used robust standard errors because of the binary outcome. Expressed pride condition was scored as 0 = *Employee B reacted neutrally*, 1 = *Employee B reacted proudly*. Same performance condition was scored as 0 = *Same performance: Specified*, 1 = *Same performance: Unspecified.* Models 1 and 3 tested the effect of the *Expressed pride condition* in the *Same performance: Specified condition.* Models 2 and 4 tested the effect of the emotion condition in the *Same performance: Unspecified condition.* Model 5 tested the relationship between the perception of how close the performance was to Employee B's performance potential and competence (i.e., the likelihood of selecting Employee B as the employee with greater job skills) in the *Same performance: Specified* condition. Model 6 show this relationship in *Same performance: Unspecified condition.*

** $p < 0.01$.

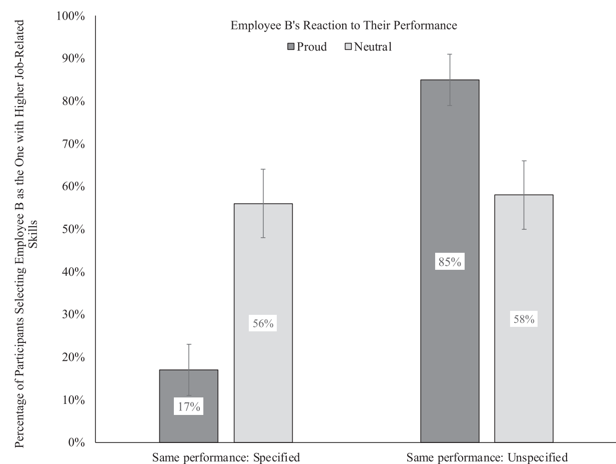

Fig. 3. *The Interactive Effect of an Employee's Emotional Reaction to Their Performance as a Function of Whether People Knew Someone Responded to the Same Performance Without Pride (Study 6). Note.* Error bars are the 95% CI.

not receive information that the employees performed the same, they were more likely to think that Employee B was the better employee when he expressed pride than when he did not (Table 4, Model 2).

Close to One's Performance Potential. Hypothesis 2 predicts that expressing pride in one's performance makes the performance seem closer to one's performance potential. The results support this prediction. In both the "Same performance: Specified" and the "Same performance: Unspecified" conditions, participants thought Employee B's performance was closer to his performance potential when he expressed pride (see Table 4, Models 3 & 4).

The Relationship Between Performance Potential and Competence. Perceptions of how close the performance was to Employee B's performance potential were related negatively to selecting Employee B as the more competent employee, $r(579) = -0.25$, $p < 0.001$. However, as Hypothesis 5 predicts, whether participants knew that the employees had the same performance moderated this relationship (see Table 4, Model 5). The relationship was negative and significant in the "Same performance: Specified" condition (see Table 4, Model 5), but not in the "Same performance: Unspecified" condition (see Table 4, Model 6).

A moderated mediation analysis showed the following. Inferences about Employee B's performance potential mediated the effect of the employee expressing pride on judgments of his competence in the "Same performance: Specified" condition (Coeff = -1.06, 95 % CI: [-1.47, −0.76]), but not in the "Same performance: Unspecified" condition (Coeff = -0.17, 95 % CI = [-0.42, 0.08]). The index of moderated mediation was significant (Coeff = 0.89, 95 % CI = [.52, 1.38]). The negative effect of Employee B expressing pride in his performance on judgments of competence was still significant in the "Same performance: Specified" condition, after controlling for judgments of how close his performance was to his performance potential, suggesting partial mediation.

Inferences about the Employees' Scores on the Aptitude Test. In the "Same performance: Specified" condition, participants thought that employees had higher scores when Employee B expressed pride in the score (the "proud" condition) than when he reacted neutrally to it (the "neutral" condition), $t(284) = 12.51$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 1.48$.

In the "Same performance: Unspecified" condition, a linear mixed model was run. Ratings of Employee A's and Employee B's performances were specified as a repeated measure, and condition (Employee B expressed pride or reacted neutrally) was specified as a between-subjects variable. The interaction between condition and which employee's performance was rated was significant, $B = 3.66$, $SE = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$.

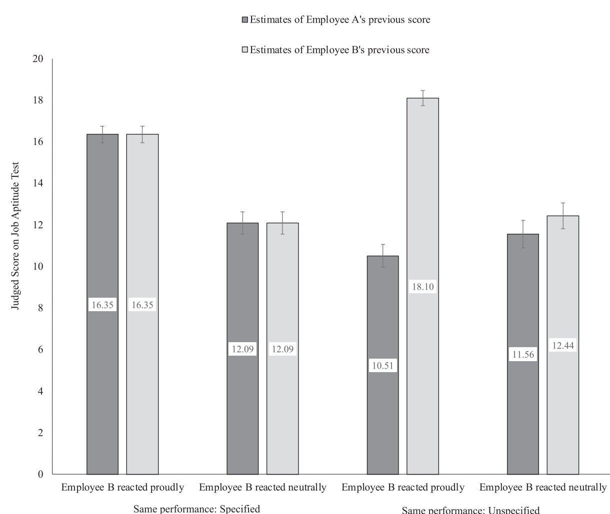

Fig. 4. Estimates of the Employees' Scores on the Job Aptitude Test (Study 6). *Note.* Participants learned that the employees had the same score in the *Same Performance: Specified* condition. Error bars are the 95% CI.

Participants thought that Employee B performed better than Employee A when Employee B expressed pride (the "pride" condition), $B = 4.08$, $SE = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$. Participants also thought that Employee B performed better than Employee A when Employee B reacted neutrally (the "neutral" condition), but this difference was not significant, $B = 0.42$, $SE = 0.25$, $p = 0.10$ (see Fig. 4).

For the "Same performance: Unspecified" condition, a mediation analysis was conducted to assess whether inferences about the employees' scores mediated the positive effect of Employee B expressing pride on participants' likelihood of selecting him as the employee with stronger job-related skills. This indirect effect was significant (Coeff = 2.71, 95 % CI: [1.99, 3.74]) (see the SOM for more details about this analysis).

9. Discussion

When participants were aware that two employees had the same score on a job aptitude test, they thought that the employee who expressed pride in their score had *poorer* job-related abilities than the one who did not. In contrast, when the employees' scores were unspecified, participants thought that the employee who expressed pride in their score had *better* job-related abilities than the one who did not. This latter effect emerged because participants assumed that the employee who expressed pride performed better than the one who did not. Study S2 replicated the results from Study 6 using a different manipulation of whether the same performance was specified and a different manipulation of employees' emotional reaction to their performance. This replication study shows that the results generalize beyond any one operationalization of the study's key constructs.

10. General Discussion

People are motivated to manage impressions of their abilities, expertise, or skills in part because these impressions can influence their social status (Anderson et al., 2015; Anderson & Kilduff, 2009; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Previous research has found that expressing pride can influence these impressions positively (e.g., Martens et al., 2012; Tracy et al., 2013, 2020). However, the results of these nine studies show that expressing pride can readily do the opposite. Across different performance domains, expressions of pride, and assessments of competence, participants consistently judged someone to be less competent when they expressed pride in a performance that someone else did not. Expressing pride in a performance resulted in higher competence judgments when participants lacked information about others' response to the same performance, thereby reconciling this work with past research on pride (see Durkee et al., 2019; Tracy et al., 2020 for reviews).

This research contributes to cumulative theoretical knowledge by identifying the critical contexts in which pride undermines people's impressions of a person's competence. Previous work on pride holds that pride communicates that one possesses status-worthy characteristics (Durkee et al., 2019; Martens et al., 2012; Shariff & Tracy, 2009; Tracy et al., 2020; Witkower et al., 2020). However, this work showed that pride does not convey this information automatically. Rather, what people infer from a person's feelings of pride depends entirely on the information that they have about others' reactions to the same pride-eliciting event. When people know that someone has reacted without pride to a performance, then expressing pride in this performance makes someone seem less competent.

This work suggests that expressing pride in a performance carries reputational risks because others may respond less positively to the same performance. The fact that people can exhibit heterogeneous emotional reactions to the same achievement is central to the current theory. Past work on pride acknowledges the heterogeneity in the specific behaviors and outcomes that elicit pride (Sznycer et al., 2018; Sznycer & Cohen, 2021). This work incorporates this heterogeneity directly in its theory and generates new insights about how expressing pride affects the

impressions that people form of those who feel proud of their accomplishments.

Past work on the relationships among pride, competence, and status arises from an evolutionary consideration of the origins of pride (e.g., Tracy et al., 2020). The expression of pride may have developed in contexts with a shared understanding of the specific events that elicited pride. People develop their frames of reference for achievement from their local environments (Huguet et al., 2009; Marsh et al., 2008). If people retain their local achievement standards when interacting in a more global, highly connected environment, which past research suggests they do (Elsner & Isphording, 2017; Ozmel & Guler, 2015), then heterogeneous emotional reactions to the same performance are likely. Thus, expressions of pride may carry liability for judgments of competence and status conferral today, which they may not have previously when pride evolved.

Situating notions about pride's signaling function in the context of heterogeneous social values opens new directions for research on pride. First, observers' socialized standards of what constitutes an achievement may affect the inferences they make about a person based on their emotional response to an achievement. People have higher performance expectations for those they deem to have higher status (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003), and higher-status individuals believe that people have higher expectations of their performance (Lount et al., 2019). Imagine someone who has been socialized in a privileged environment where high academic achievement is standard and expected. They likely have a higher threshold for what they deem a prideworthy scholastic performance than someone socialized in a more disadvantaged environment, where high achievement is more difficult or obstructed (e.g., Marsh, 1987). When these two people encounter the same person expressing pride for the same academic performance, they may have different inferences of the person's abilities.

Second, people may hide their pride strategically to manage impressions of their competence. The results of the pilot studies showed that people recognize the liability that expressing pride can have on judgments of their competence and status. That is, people reported that they have concealed their pride to manage impressions of their underlying abilities and future achievements. This finding that people will hide their pride out of concern about appearing incompetent advances research on how emotional expression helps or harms interpersonal impressions (see Greenaway et al., 2018; Kalokerinos et al., 2014; Schall et al., 2016).

This work integrates EASI (Van Kleef, 2009) with the concept of heterogeneity in what people consider success, generating new predictions about what expressing pride in a performance conveys about a person's competence and potential. While the focus is on pride and perceived competence, this integration likely impacts other emotions and interpersonal judgments. Exploratory findings on the expression of shame and measures of liking and arrogance suggest this heterogeneity manifests for a variety of outcomes and inferences. Future research on the social information conveyed by emotions should account for this heterogeneity, particularly because people can respond to success in a variety of ways. They may feel pride, relief, or indifference. They may express gratitude, boast, or display humility. What would the current findings suggest about the inferences people would make about someone from these other reactions?

Presumably, expressing satisfaction or happiness in a performance would yield similar results since, like pride, these emotions convey that the person regards their performance as an achievement. Indeed, expressions of happiness or satisfaction may be so close to expressing pride as to be indistinguishable from it. Consequently, the present results would likely be the same if someone expresses that they feel proud, happy, or satisfied with a performance.[2]

But consider instead that someone brags or shows a lack of humility in response to a performance. The results of Studies 2, 5a, and 5b show that expressing pride in a performance is not perceived as bragging. Bragging and showing a lack of humility can signal competence (Berman et al., 2015; Zapata & Hayes-Jones, 2019). However, according to the current theory, this may not be the case when observers know that others have responded without bragging or with humility to the same success. In this case, like expressing pride, bragging or showing a lack of humility likely would signal lower competence. However, unlike expressing pride, these responses likely would also signal that someone is arrogant and unlikable (see Cojuharenco & Karelaia, 2020; Zapata & Hayes-Jones, 2019).

11. Limitations and Future Directions

The results of these studies cannot address the way that expressing pride affects self-perceptions of competence or the actual status level that one achieves. This is important to note because the tactics that people use to manage others' impressions of their performance are not necessarily the same tactics that can promote their performance (Sezer, 2022). Dispositional pride is related positively to status attainment, and stated feelings of pride can make people feel more confident, agentic, and motivated (Ho et al., 2016; Williams & DeSteno, 2008, 2009). However, the opposite can also occur, in which feelings of less pride in one's current performance are related positively to goal pursuit (Weidman et al., 2016). These motivational aspects of pride could affect status attainment and conferral positively, overriding the negative effects of perceived competence observed here.

This work focused on people's emotional reactions to concrete achievements. Expressing pride about more abstract successes may generate different effects. Imagine that someone expresses pride in overcoming an obstacle. Because persisting in the face of hardship is socially valued (Sznycer et al., 2018), expressing pride in response to this abstract achievement may signal that the person endorses this social value and lead to favorable interpersonal impressions and potentially greater status conferral.

The results showed that people thought someone performed closer to their performance potential when they expressed pride in a performance than when they did not. This finding marks a new insight about the specific information that people infer from others' feelings of pride. Future research would benefit from understanding the precise inferences people make when judging someone's performance potential. Perhaps when someone expresses pride in a performance it conveys information about the person's internal beliefs about their abilities. Alternatively, expressing pride in a performance may convey information about what this person thinks others consider a success. Delineating the specific inferences that people make to cause them to see a performance as closer to one's performance potential would provide a more fine-grained picture of the current findings.

The present studies suggest that the results are not contingent on a particular performance level. The effect emerged regardless of whether participants were informed that the two people excelled (Study 2),

[2] I ran a preregistered experiment to test this (see the SOM for "*Feels happy or proud of a performance* vs. "*is a happy or proud person*" study). I asked participants if someone feels proud or happy about a performance do they also feel the other emotion about the performance. Nearly all participants (98%) agreed, suggesting that while pride and happiness are distinguishable emotions, they are not differentiated in the context of people's emotional responses to a performance.

performed well or above average (e.g., Study 4), or received no specific performance feedback besides knowing the two people performed the same task (Studies 5a, 5b, 6, and S2). Exploratory analysis in Study S1 also revealed that whether participants learned that the targets' scores equated to an above average or an excellent performance did not moderate the effects. Nevertheless, I urge caution in assuming the magnitude of the effect would persist across performance levels. It is plausible that extreme performance outcomes, such as exceedingly poor or outstanding performances (e.g., winning the World Cup), could overpower the impact of emotional expressions on judgments of competence. In such cases, performance levels might moderate the findings due to the stronger signals of competence they convey. For example, someone who feels proud of scoring two goals in the World Cup Final might be seen as maximally skilled even if someone else does not show pride for the same accomplishment. This is simply because the feat itself signals such high competence as to possibly overwhelm or crowd out other signals of competence. This signal could create a ceiling effect on competence.

This reasoning regarding exceedingly good performance may apply to exceedingly poor performance, but what is a poor performance for one person might be a success for another. It is this heterogeneity that inspired much of this work and what also appears to motivate people to conceal their pride. The pilot studies revealed that people feel proud of things at work that others might deem as not pride worthy (e.g., learning a new feature in PowerPoint). People can be reluctant to express pride in these personal achievements because they fear the achievement might not evoke pride in others.

People report being concerned that others might judge their abilities negatively for feeling proud of seemingly mundane things, and thus do not share their feelings of pride with others. People only know the pride experiences others are willing to share, but people report intentionally concealing their pride when they fear others would not similarly feel proud of the same performance. This suggests that the literature on pride may have missed important aspects of people's pride experiences by sampling only on the pride experiences people are motivated to share (see Hurwitz-Michaely, 2021 for a related point).

12. Conclusion

Pride is a powerful, positive emotion that people express in response to high achievement. These feelings of pride can increase self-perceived status. However, this work showed that expressing pride can undermine one's ascribed competence and status, suggesting that there is veracity in the oft-cited advice: "When you get to the endzone, act like you've been there before."[3].

During the preparation of this work the author used ChatGPT-4 to help identify typos and grammatical errors. After using this tool/service, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

Rebecca L. Schaumberg: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

https://osf.io/d5hn4/?view_only=cadd8b2a098044a897eedbf58d31a6fb.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2024.104352.

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[3] This oft-repeated quote has been attributed to various football coaches, including Vince Lombardi. Lombardi told Travis Williams, who celebrated in the endzone after scoring a touchdown, "Travis, the next time you make it to the endzone, act like you've been there before" (Maraniss, 2000).

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