Pride is pleasurable emotion that reinforces socially valued behaviors (Tracy & Robins 2010). It motivates people to work hard to achieve, thereby facilitating the development of valuable knowledge and skills; it promotes the attainment of prestige, which entails a built-in incentive to share the fruits of one’s achievements with others; and it cues discriminatory social learning, a process that occurs largely in relationships formed across many different interactions, and which takes into account the time, compared to 50% for happiness, and 20–30% for shame and neutral expressions (Martens & Tracy 2017). This is why the social benefits of pride are adaptive in human societies, where individuals need to work with others to achieve shared goals. Pride motivates us to teach our achievements to others, and it cues us to selectively learn from others, thereby building social networks and relationships that are adaptive and advantageous for ongoing collaboration. Furthermore, a felt absence of pride motivates under-performing individuals to change their ineffective behavior, thereby learning from others, and improving their performance. However, in many cases pride may motivate individuals to over-state their knowledge and skills, thereby gaining others’ trust and deference, demonstrating an adaptive mechanism that can be genetically transmitted across cultures (Birch et al. 2015).

Turning to the second critical process, a willingness to teach, here pride is crucial because it facilitates the attainment of prestige. Pride motivates individuals to help and advise others, and provides a framework for social learning, wherein individuals build, and discover; (2) a willingness to teach one’s creations to others; and (3) an ability to selectively learn from others who are experts in their field. Numerous studies have shown that when lacking information about a model’s accuracy, individuals seek cues of expertise in the form of nonverbal displays of certainty (Birch et al. 2015; Feltman et al. 2014). Furthermore, individuals who observe nonverbal displays of pride are more likely to copy and learn from others who demonstrate accurate, rather than inaccurate, knowledge (Koenig & Woodward 2010). Therefore, the nonverbal expression of pride: Evidence for cross-cultural recognition; Martens & Tracy 2017). This is why pride cues individuals to learn from social models who demonstrate accurate, rather than inaccurate, knowledge (Koenig & Woodward 2010).

The secret of our success: How culture is driving human evolution, domesticating our species, and making us smarter. (Shariff & Tracy 2019). Furthermore, a felt absence of pride motivates under-performing individuals to change their ineffective behavior, thereby learning from others, and improving their performance. However, in many cases pride may motivate individuals to over-state their knowledge and skills, thereby gaining others’ trust and deference, demonstrating an adaptive mechanism that can be genetically transmitted across cultures (Birch et al. 2015).

To test whether adults, too, selectively learn from social models who display pride, we incentivized participants to correctly answer a difficult trivia question and gave them the opportunity to copy an answer offered by a peer—who was actually a confederate, and who either correctly or incorrectly answered the question. Participants were randomly assigned to either receive nonverbal displays of certainty (Birch et al. 2015; Feltman et al. 2014) or not (control). Participants were more likely to copy correct answers when they observed nonverbal displays of pride, compared to when they observed control displays (Martens & Tracy 2017). Furthermore, a felt absence of pride motivates under-performing individuals to change their ineffective behavior, thereby learning from others, and improving their performance. However, in many cases pride may motivate individuals to over-state their knowledge and skills, thereby gaining others’ trust and deference, demonstrating an adaptive mechanism that can be genetically transmitted across cultures (Birch et al. 2015).

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