



FINNISH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THE PRIDE EXPERIENCEⁱ

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Abstract:

This research examined the emotion *pride* from a small sample of twenty Finnish high school students. The school students were interviewed to explore their perceptions of pride as an essential emotion for success at school and later life. The interviews revealed personal achievements, having a 'tough skin,' taking responsibility, displaying humility, and being strategic in life as more important than self-pride. The results indicate the teenagers are committed to traditional cultural values of family, achievement, humility, and resilience. This study is important for discussions regarding culture, self-esteem, motivation, ambition, work ethic and emotions.

Keywords: pride, emotions, Finland, teenagers, culture, high school

1. Introduction

Emotion is a “*process, a particular kind of automatic appraisal influenced by our evolutionary and personal past, in which we sense that something important to our welfare is occurring*” (Ekman, 2003, p. 30). Emotions determine the quality of our lives and they occur in every relationship we care about (Ekman, 2003). Researchers in education have mainly neglected emotions, such as embarrassment, pride, and shame as motivating forces for teaching and learning (Tracey & Robbins, 2008). In particular, self-conscious (or social) emotions such as the pride expression has been documented as an important emotion for educators to investigate because teachers and school administrators express a shared view that pride is a crucial feature of academic success and identity formation. However, although there are people who celebrate the emotion pride and want it to flourish; others have warned against, opposed, and discouraged pride as a precarious emotion. As a result, educators are confused as to whether they should encourage pride in their students or discourage it by directing them to other emotions.

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This study aims to determine how high school students in Helsinki Finland understand the importance of self-pride in their present schooling and later life. The assumption leading into this study is that pride is a culturally significant universal emotion and is not given equal importance in all cultures, one of those cultures being Finnish culture. Finland was chosen because educators do not tend to celebrate self-pride (see Etherington, 2019). In diverse classrooms, teachers must be cognizant of such cultural differences if they are to teach to diversity.

2. What is pride?

Pride has a wide range of definitions and meanings (Williams and DeSteno, 2008). In its affirmative application, pride refers to excellence, beauty, identity, confidence, personal success, and achievement. Pride is associated with advancing voluntary moral action, especially in adolescence, leading to establishing a moral identity (Hart & Matsuba, 2007). In its harmful application, pride can refer to arrogance, vanity, narcissism, being envied and negatively evaluated, and a desire to be superior to others. Traditionally all religious traditions have narratives about pride, and in particular, warnings about pride. Augustine, easily one of the great political minds and a star in the constellation of Western thinkers, insisted that the situation in which one man rules over another man as his superior is a consequence of sin, specifically the sin of pride (Baker, 2012).

Research by Tracey & Robbins (2008) proposes that pride is a universal emotion and is recognized and associated with a distinct nonverbal expression. A nonverbal expression is spontaneously displayed during pride experiences, consisting of authentic pride (AP) and hubristic pride (HP). Authentic pride is associated with effort and a sense of achievement, whereas hubristic pride is associated with talent/ability and feeling superior to others (Gilchrist & Sabiston, 2018). Moreover, people can exploit pride to devise schemes to deceive the weak, and in doing so, betray themselves, generating superiority and self-indulgence. Not surprisingly, parents of young and older children will often try and curb pride in their children, instructing them to be humble winners in life.

When pride is associated with the social comparison of others, a desire for superiority is more likely. However, when pride is used to compare one's past self to one's present self, there is a shift away from being better than others towards being better than one's old self (Gürel, Brummelman, Sedikides & Overbeek, 2020).

Pride also has an appearance or physical manifestation. Tracey & Robbins (2008) describe the physical attributes of pride:

“The pride expression includes the body (i.e., expanded posture, head tilted back) as well as the face (i.e., low intensity, non-Duchenne smile); it has been shown to be reliably recognized and distinguished from similar emotions (e.g., happiness) using forced-choice and open-ended response methods; and it is reliably recognized by American adults and children as young as 4 years old.” (Tracey & Robbins, 2008, p.517)

In a study that looked at the association of pride, goal striving, and effort with students at university, some of the findings suggest that students pursue particular goals—described as 'goal pursuers' less likely to expend effort goal progress. This occurred the day after they experienced certain emotions such as pride. The reduced time they spent on a goal is termed 'goal coasting' (Seo & Patall, 2020).

People are supportive of pride however also skeptical to the adverse effects. More often than not, the general public have adopted the word to express admiration of others, "I am so proud of you," or as a simple encouragement such as "just be proud." However, on balance, the notion of pride is neither universally celebrated nor discouraged, and with a lack of clarity, together with the potential realizations and ruins of encouraging pride in school-aged youth, understood as a topic of research, this emotion is an important topic of investigation.

3. Finnish culture and pride

Finnish culture and its people are characteristically recognized for embracing a commitment to completing tasks, displaying humility, being modest in behavior, and holding to traditional values of responsibility, rules and order. The Independence Day greeting on 6 December 2020 given by the president of the Republic of Finland to Finnish expatriates and Finns abroad reveal the importance they place on humility, lawfulness and self-respect:

*"You are representatives of Finnishness in the world. Each of you carry the blue-and-white flag with dignity. Finland needs friends throughout the world. I express my heartfelt thanks to you for that."*ⁱⁱⁱ

These presidential words encapsulate Finnish values and her people. It is a culture of responsibility with a lived experience of dignity, citizenship, rules, principle, and self-respect. Much of this knowledge is tacit, but prompts are overt. The president could have reminded Finns to carry the blue-and-white flag with *pride*, but that image is too confronting and not culturally adored. A Finnish citizen can earn their dignity, but they do not (should not) necessarily claim it on their own; that is not how one receives the friendship and loyalty of others. Instead, people may grant it because of character and the virtues one believes in and lives out.

A few years back, this became real to me while watching a Finnish girl's football team and an outstanding and successful American girl's football team. Up against the Americans, the Finnish team was not favored to triumph; however, they were skilled and managed to score several touchdowns against their competitors before eventually losing to their opponents. I noticed, and I am quite sure that everybody else did, too, that during the game, when the Finnish team scored a touchdown, the Finnish supporters, the coach,

ⁱⁱⁱ See, "Independence Day greeting from the President of the Republic of Finland to Finnish expatriates and Finns abroad on 6 December 2020". <https://suomi-seura.fi/independence-day-greeting-from-the-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-to-finnish-expatriates-and-finns-abroad-on-6-december-2020/>

and the team itself were utterly silent and non-expressive. However, when the American team scored a touchdown, there was thunderous applause, cheering, high fives, flag-waving, and screams of joy from the players, the coaches, and their fans. The contrast between the two teams was genuinely extraordinary. It could be argued that the American team displayed overwhelming pride in their achievements on the playing field, while the Finnish team demonstrated modesty and humility. This is a small-scale version of two different cultures.

On the website Hofstede Insights, the Dutch social psychologist Gerald Hofstede offers an analysis of Finland's cultural system regarding competition and success. Under the description of Masculine and Feminine, he writes:

"A high score (Masculine) on this dimension indicates that the society will be driven by competition, achievement and success, with success being defined by the winner/best in field – a value system that starts in school and continues throughout organizational life. A low score (Feminine) on the dimension means that the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. A Feminine society is one where quality of life is the sign of success and standing out from the crowd is not admirable." (Hofstede Insights, n.d)

The fundamental issue here is what motivates Finnish people, wanting to be the best (Masculine) or liking what they do (Feminine). Finland scores 26 on this dimension and is accordingly considered a Feminine society. In Feminine countries like Finland, the focus is on "working to live." In the workplace, this includes workers and employers striving for consensus, valuing equality, solidarity, and quality in their working lives. Conflicts do occur, but they are resolved by compromise and negotiation. Incentives such as free time and flexibility are favored. Focus is on well-being, and status is not important, nor is it shown. An effective manager is a supportive one, a team player, and decision-making is achieved through shared contribution.

Finnish people are indeed 'proud' people; for a small nation, they have realized many accomplishments. Finnish Independence Day celebrates Finnish independence from Russia, and they are regularly ranked as a leading country for higher education. There is national pride in Finnish hockey and their encounters with arch-enemy Sweden. Finns have much to be proud of; however, they are also a small nation with common goals and so pride is uniquely experienced and displayed. It is understood that one member can do anything they desire because others may be negatively affected. An appropriate aphorism that represents this is, 'All for one, and one for all.' They are individuals but also members of a group, cognizant of each other's equality and importance.

4. Finnish education

In December 2004, the *Financial Times* wrote an editorial on Finnish education and practice. Finnish education, they claimed, were ranked number one in the world in

mathematics, reading, and science. Their success was not associated with 'pouring' government money into schools (Laitner and Green, 2004), rather, countries like Finland had decentralized their educational decision-making, which had a positive effect on increasing student autonomy, relatedness, and trustworthiness between teachers, students and parents. Moreover, Finnish schools attracted highly motivated teaching staff with healthy civic loyalty, trust, and social capital. The students reported to enjoy their schooling and were highly self-motivated learners. Youth who did not wish to attend university had a well-structured vocational stream to embark upon (Nauman, 2018).

Finnish education is grounded in a culture that is high in social capital. An 'Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development' (OECD) report, titled, *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-Being*, revealed that only two percent of the Finnish population displayed low life satisfaction, and only four percent of Finns said that they have no friends or family to report to in times of need. In Finland, cooperation in the form of social capital and collective decision making is required for general wellness and basic survival. In contrast, Nauman (2018, p.11) highlights that American culture is focused on self-sufficiency, individualism and monetary and social status. However, American civic values are also driven by compassion and a drive toward serving others. For example, volunteering has been and still is a hallmark of American civic life and culture (see Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S Department of Labor).

So if pride is a universal emotion, is it a natural to Finnish culture? There is evidence that cultures with collectivistic orientations place less value on pride than do more individualistic cultures (Heine, Kitayama, & Hamamura, 2007) and therefore it is no surprise that pride is viewed less positively in collectivistic cultures than individualistic ones (Eid & Diener, 2001 cited in Tracey & Robbins, 2008). Although Finland is individualist at a micro level, i.e., individual behavior and freedom, it is also a collectivist culture at a macro level, i.e., institutional and nationwide expectations. In other words, Finnish culture displays a type of 'bounded freedom.' There are cultural rules that must be followed but if the rules are respected, one is free to pursue individual pursuits. Consequently, earlier research conducted by this author in 2019 with Finnish high school teachers revealed that pride is not perceived as an emotion to encourage in school children because it disrupts cultural guidelines such as equality and displaying humility (see Etherington, 2019).

5. Materials and methods

This study garnered the lived experience of twenty Finnish teenagers during their final years of high school. Collecting lived experience to gain insight into a phenomenon can be defined as existential phenomenological inquiry (van Manen, 2002) or narrative research. This can entail various methods, including ethnobiography, analyzing biographies, and narrative interviewing (Casey, 1996).

Interviews play a central role in educational research; consequently, this study employed the interview technique of collecting insights and perspectives. In the study, a

phenomenological inquiry was used as the narrative interviewing method, which proved strategic for analyzing the pride experience's thematic aspects.

The notion of theme suggests a formula or device for conducting research; however, it is a process of invention, discovery, and disclosure, and consequently, it is not rule-bound (van Manen, 2002). In the study, narrative interviewing placed the Finnish high school students at the heart of the research. Findings and themes developed, including the ways Finnish youth perceive themselves in the present and future.

As the sole researcher of this study, I decided to travel to Finland and interview high school students about pride. In July 2019, over three school days, I conducted twenty interviews. A majority of the interviews were conducted onsite in one large public high school located in Helsinki, Finland. Using a sample of convenience, I took advantage of using various types of interview formats. This included individual interviews and paired interviews. A majority of the interviews were conducted with individuals.

The interviews were not publicized as a study about pride. It was essential to conceal the research topic as much as possible because it was crucial to know if the students were acquainted with pride as an emotion. This would confirm research by Tracey and Robin (2008) that pride is a universal human emotion.

Therefore, I wanted to investigate if pride was a concept the students were familiar with and then determine how the students thought about pride; that is, whether the emotion was related to achievement, identified as an essential component of achievement or related more to the self. If, during the interviews, pride became a topic of discussion, it was because the students referred to the emotion and not because the researcher had introduced it. Consequently, deception was a vital and justified feature of the research.

All the interviewees referred to the notion of pride during the interviews. This occurred soon after viewing the two photographs with a male and female displaying a typical pride posture, e.g., head slightly back, slight grin, and hands on hips (see Tracey and Robbins, 2008).

On day one, before beginning the first round of interviews, the high school principal welcomed me to the school campus. Before my visit, the principal had recruited several students who expressed interest in being interviewed. The principal and I explained that the study was to understand the journey of being a learner and how they perceived their future employment in the workforce.

There were 20 recorded interviews conducted, with most of these interviews taking place on the school campus. Five interviews occurred in the homes of the interviewees. Each interview was approximately 45-60 minutes. Some of the interviews were paired, although most of the interviews consisted of one individual with the researcher.

Each interview began with displaying two photographs of a man and woman displaying the pride emotion (see Appendix 1). The photographs represent two individuals with their hands-on-hips, a slight grin with the chin and head angled slightly back. The photographs were retrieved from the University of British Columbia's (UBC)

emotion and self- lab.^{iv} The self-conscious emotion of pride may have a recognizable nonverbal expression (Tracey & Robbins, 2008). The photographs were a significant feature of the study as a data gathering tool.

With the two photographs displayed on an iPad and placed directly in front of the students, the researcher began with four leading questions.

Question 1: What do you think these two people are feeling?

Question 2: Is this a good emotion?

Question 3: Do you ever have this emotion or feeling?

Question 4: Do you hope to become successful or great in life?

The data generated used these four semi-structured questions. The questions and responses captured the essence of the two main research objectives: to determine if the students could recognize the emotion of pride and investigate their use for pride. The goal was to consider how these school students utilize pride at school and in life.

6. Results: The Pride Experience

The interviews were conducted in pairs and also individually. Each interview began with showing the two photographs of one male and one female displaying the pride posture.

Upon seeing the photographs, most of the students recognized the two individuals as displaying pride.

The following Table 1.0, 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 reveal the student responses to the four main research questions. The responses were concentrated for analysis and clarity.

Table 1.0: Photograph: What do you think these two people are feeling?

Väinö (M1) and Maija (F2)	<i>Maija:</i> He (image) is feeling pride; he is proud of himself, and maybe even arrogant. <i>Väinö:</i> I wouldn't usually see a person do this, but he is confident.
Armas (M3) and Anna (F4)	<i>Armas:</i> I think he is very confident and relaxed, <i>Anna:</i> a little bit awkward, very tense.
Aino (F5) and Laaku (M6)	<i>Aino:</i> He looks confident, with accomplishments. He is smiling and his eyes. <i>Laaku:</i> He looks prideful, happy; he has a power pose. He is proud of something and superior, this strong pose, his eyes, and smile. I find this person funny because he is a caricature, artificial. He looks like a bragger.
Matteus (M7)	He is proud and confident and feeling good about himself. He is not trustworthy; he is egotistical, smug, and likes himself.
Raakel (F8)	Confident but happy.
Werner (M9)	They are confident and feel good about themselves. They are victory and fear nothing and go into the front of other people, which will be noticed. They are also false. It is emotional and rare. Sometimes it is in you, but I wouldn't be like that.
Ilda (F10)	It is not natural. That is how the world would like you but that this not reality. Other people cannot understand that is confidence, but it is not real.
Julia (F11)	He/She is happy and very confident. That (image) is more spontaneous (pride) but this is not the way I show confidence.

^{iv} See, "UBC Emotion & Self Lab", <http://ubc-emotionlab.ca/>

	He is telling you that I am better than you.
Tanja (F12)	Feeling confident. I don't think you should express yourself that much. People would look at me in a strange way. It is not normal.
Olivia (F13)	This person is bragging and lots of self-confidence and not someone I would like to meet because he doesn't seem trustworthy. If you would get to know him closer then I could trust him, but not a friend and I would not want to be this guy's friend.
Yrjo (M14)	He is confident and his body is athletic and seems happy but I would lose people around me if I looked like that image.
Aliisa (F15)	Some success and confidence. They are open in posture and satisfied and not afraid to show themselves and to me that is super confident.
Uke (M16)	He is proud of something. He is proud of something he has done (not of himself. He is proud of something he has made.
Kaisa (F17)	They are powerful and confident. They know their thing and got it together. He wakes up early and goes to the gym and has a structured life.
Ditte (F18)	He is confident and believes in himself and can do it and happy. He looks friendly. Talks a lot and is not shy. He would be fun.
Otto (M19)	He is very confident and he knows what he is doing. Very cocky but it depends. He is showing that he is better than other people. At school this is stupid. You would stand out. People would say this is too confident.
Sami (M20)	Very arrogant. He is showing that he is better than others.

Did the teenagers consider pride to be good emotion to display and could you trust someone who displayed pride? Here the outcomes were mixed. The following results are presented in Table 1.1:

Table 1.1: Results: Is this a good emotion?

Väinö (M1) and Maija (F2)	<i>Väinö:</i> I think it is a good emotion to be confident in yourself. It is good because I would always like to think that I can do anything. He feels I am the best. <i>Tauno:</i> Yes, absolutely. This is the most important thing that people don't realize. People here think they are not good enough and that is the problem. That is why you don't succeed if you don't believe in yourself. That is a bit of a problem here, people will say that you are arrogant.
Armas (M3) and Anna (F4)	<i>Anna:</i> Yes, but he has something to learn, he doesn't know everything <i>Armas –</i> Yes, he looks happy.
Aino (F5) and Laaku (M6)	<i>Laaku:</i> Yes. <i>Aino:</i> No, he is not trustworthy? He is egoistical, smug, likes himself
Matteus (M7)	It is arrogant but confidence is good.
Raakel (F8)	No. If he came in as a just a normal person and not a leader then he would be arrogant. He is full of himself. When I look at it more, I don't trust him. If I told him a secret he wouldn't keep it and then he would say, well what are you going to do about it? He would want to fight. He doesn't look kind or trustworthy as he looks superior to others. I avoid talking to people like that.
Werner (M9)	It is not natural. That is how the world would like you but that this not reality. Other people can't understand that it might be confidence but it is not real.
Ilda(F10) and Julia (F11)	<i>Ilda:</i> He will first succeed and then make some dumb mistake and not be successful anymore. <i>Julia:</i> I think this guy is a cheater and this is because he has a big ego and self-confidence because he thinks he is a great guy. He need a partner on his side to boost his ego.

Tanja (F12)	No, I don't trust boys because I have experienced boys teasing me and I don't trust them. The girl is more reliable. Her eyes are gentler. She is a listener rather than a talker.
Olivia (F13)	Probably not because he would tell his friends your secrets and lie.
Yrjo (M14)	Well, mmm, I don't know. It's a hard question. If I don't know them, his personality, just the way he shows himself, I think he seems pretty open but I am not sure I would trust him. He looks confident but if a person is more introverted it is easier to trust the person.
Aliisa (F15)	I don't know. I am open and probably would. He seems an open book. I don't want to assume they are trying to deceive me.
Uke (M16)	Yes because he is proud of something he has made.
Kaisa (F17)	No maybe I won't. If I tell him a secret, he would tell and be proud of telling the secret. He doesn't think much, he would just do it.
Ditte (F18)	Not necessarily. He will get people to talk to him and has many secrets he has captured from people so no. He looks too confident. He looks easy to talk with but he is not trustworthy.
Otto (M19)	I would have to know him first. I am unsure. He looks like he is the centre of everything and does not think of others. I wouldn't tell him a secret unless he proves himself. He wants to be everyone's friends.
Sami (M20)	No no, his face. He tells secrets to everyone. His eyes, he is over everyone else and can tell anything, and does not care. He is a talker and doesn't listen. He talks about his achievements and the ladies he has.

Table 1.2: Results: Do you ever have this emotion or feeling?

Väinö (M1) and Maija (F2)	<p><i>Väinö:</i> When I accomplish something. When someone gives you a compliment, a parent or a teacher. You feel good and also when I do something nice to other people and they show emotions back, I feel like that, I feel happier.</p> <p><i>Maija:</i> When I succeed or accomplish something that I really care about and I feel happy about myself.</p>
Armas (M3) and Anna (F4)	<p><i>Armas:</i> When I am hanging out with people I like and not new people, people you know. If I am wanting to make a good first impression and be friendly like he is smiling, stand up straight, to be liked then this is good, but with friends only.</p> <p><i>Anna:</i> When I am happy and confident.</p>
Aino (F5) and Laaku (M6)	<p><i>Laaku:</i> Not much and not all the time.</p> <p><i>Aino:</i> He talks like he thinks he is better than someone. Not to compare yourself to others and you can achieve that is great but not if you look down on others.</p>
Matteus (M7)	If I have done something. Last year when I got my results back and I got the highest score in my favourite subjects and I had never got that before but when this emotion happens, I am arrogant to the people around me but I am not self-aware when I act like this because I don't see myself as this kind of person normally.
Raakel (F8)	Yes. When I am kind to others and I always do my best to be a friend and that is the best part of me. But I keep it to myself.
Werner (M9)	If I said something and it turned out to be true or if I give an answer to something, but it would stay in my head.
Ilda (F10) and Julia (F11)	<i>Ilda:</i> When I have done something really well and everyone is talking about it. But I don't feel like that without other people's recognition.

	<i>Julia</i> : If I was home alone, this image could be me. If I am watching ice hockey and Finland was to become world champion, and I was alone in my home.
Tanja (F12)	Yes. I tell people about my good grades but then they start to complain that I gets good marks. Then they complain to me and their friends.
Olivia (F13)	Never
Yrjo (M14)	Yes when I have done well in sports, this is when I feel strong but this prideful pose is bragging.
Aliisa (F15)	I am an open person. I can feel like this pride when I am with my friends and they make me feel happy.
Uke (M16)	Sometimes when it is significant but with academic success.
Kaisa (F17)	No, I just tell a friend, maybe.
Ditte (F18)	Yes. Well in school when in the senior year we have so much going on and it's easier to be like this so others don't see that it is not too much for me.
Otto (M19)	It is a fear in my mind but I don't show myself like this. It draws too much attention. For some people maybe but not for me. Most friends think like me. If something good happens, a good score of the test, well I give a high five to life.
Sami (M20)	Yes, when I am not confident. I was very shy when I was young. I used to swim in competition and tried to do it and show other people but I still lost. My coach said just do it and show what you have in the pool and not outside the pool.

Table 1.3: Results: Do you hope to become successful or great in life?

Väinö (M1) and Maija (F2)	<p><i>Maija</i>: I don't really think much of that, I set the bar really low. I have never had a motivation to be someone great. It is more important for me to enjoy myself and enjoy having fun in life and people around me are having fun because that makes me feel good.</p> <p><i>Väinö</i>: I am taking one step at a time. There is the military and I might be going to film school overseas but we always develop. I don't think that you can ever really have a plan for like five years ahead because you always figure it out at some points and you are never really the same. I have a couple of years planed right now and then I will see life takes me.</p>
Armas (M3) and Anna (F4)	<p><i>Armas</i>: I don't want to be great or the best at what I do, just enjoy it and it helps me in everyday life, it can support my children, but I don't have a need to be the greatest.</p> <p><i>Anna</i>: I just want to be honest with myself and do the best I can do, using all my resources and putting everything into it but I don't need to be at the top of everything. That is not the first priority for me. Just to like what I do.</p>
Aino (F5) and Laaku (M6)	<p><i>Laaku</i>: No, I definitely don't have that high ambition. If I tried to become the best in every subject, it would require a lot of time and dedication and I wouldn't be happy, it would harm me more and so I don't think I would ever want to be the best.</p> <p><i>Aino</i>: No. When I look back on my life I just want to be proud of myself or like what I have achieved. That is the most important thing. It should be your own goals that is the most important thing. Life is not like being the best, it is your achieving your own goals that you set, that is important. Well if being the best is what you want but not me.</p>
Matteus (M7)	To have people describe me as successful I don't see that as particularly interesting. It is that kind of idea, to dream in that way which is not very helpful. I don't think that great people do that, they don't perceive themselves like that but are rather self-critical. My goal is just to do the best I can and if others see me as successful then fine. But that is never my goal.

Raakel (F8)	The first thought is being richer but it's not what I want. I will have a family, a job I like, and of the things I like. I don't need to be a big leader to be happy. Do my best now so I can thank myself later. I want my family to be proud. But they don't care about how I do in school. My family are my most important guides in my life. Just do the best for my children so they are happy. I don't want to be the greatest in life, I just want to be happy and be myself.
Werner (M9)	Have a positive life, be positive. If you don't have any money but you are positive — enough!
Ilda (F10) Julia (F11)	<i>Ilda:</i> For me it is being humble which is better than being arrogant (refers back to photograph). <i>Julia:</i> I can feel like this image sometimes in classes and then I will be challenged. So if I am not challenged at all then I can feel like this photograph and be prideful. Like sports, when I know I am good, then I am so happy, and it is because I won.
Tanja (F12)	(N/A)
Olivia (F13)	No not the best because when you are the best you have a lot of pressure on you. If you are the best you have to be the best all the time and that is stressful. I want to be a mechanic so being a successful mechanic means that people would ask me to do their work.
Yrjo (M14)	To have a good relationship and have kids and have a family. My friends have families and they don't bond but my family will be bonded and belong and knowing I am always there to support them. The best financial worker, no. Just to be known by my good decisions and being equal to everyone. I want to help people and get enough money to live in a regular house.
Aliisa (F15)	Being the greatest musician or whatever? Well it's great when people see you as being great at what you do because I have done something that makes people feel good, but with things like that there come the fact that people are not going to know you, and you will become anonymous and that is not what I want because I would like to live just a normal life. I would like to be a singer but at the same time I want to live just a normal life. People who are famous are stressed out. I would rather live in peace rather than thinking people are saying this or that about me. I don't think I would be able to handle all that stress.
Uke (M16)	I want to do civics and philosophy. No no. I don't really care about being the best, I just care about doing well. I want to be good but I don't care about being the best. Because I believe there will always be someone better than you somewhere so I don't think that is a realistic goal. I see it is sad trying to become successful to show some sort of perfection. There will always be someone who puts in more effort than me and knows more than me so it doesn't matter. As long as I am doing well. There are 60 to 70% people who don't get into university, so not failing classes and having a nice balanced grades and a job I like, and just to live a comfortable lifestyle.
Kaisa (F17)	No, no, just a basic life. Very good only.
Ditte (F18)	A medical doctor. Well yeah but I would strive to be the best. Not knowing everything but doing the best by the patients. Just being wise and that I was nice. Happy and smart and wise, yeah and patient and always ready to help others.
Otto (M19)	I don't see that as important and never have. Just the middle guy. If you make a bad decision you could affect the lives of many people. Being the best would be like that. You still have responsibility for an important thing you do but you don't have stress about 24 hours a day. You come home and don't have to think about it.
Sami (M20)	I want to be a navy seal. Yes because I don't go there and not give 100% and see where it takes me. Maybe best for me. Maybe if I feel like I am the best, or maybe others tell me. If there are no problems I know I am best.

7. Discussion

The following themes are extracted from the data, constructed by the researcher, and shaped by analysis and interpretation. In this way, the themes are generated, identified, and constructed by the researcher.

7.1 Uniformity and culture

Generally speaking, Finnish culture does not represent displays of personal power or social status. Rather traditional values of humility and modesty are more realistic representations of Finnish values. These cultural norms have a noticeable effect on the students. Collectively, they tend to exalt values represented of humility and modesty, which correlate with Finland's religio-cultural aspects. Religion is a 'cultural system' composed of values, beliefs, and instruction. One of those instructions is counsel against pride. If religious traditions influence culture, then it should be expected that pride has a minimal warrant. This is evident but not surprising because many Finnish people continue to identify with the tradition of Christianity. Although only nine percent of people regularly attend church, a majority, 68 percent, still identify with the tradition and describe themselves as non-practicing Christians (see Pew Research Centre, 2018).

Therefore, the Christian tradition and identity remain a meaningful marker in Finnish culture and are evident in the students' responses regarding pride. Similarly, the students in this study, whether they be practicing or non-practicing, are influenced by a tradition that informs their beliefs and opinions on specific issues. One of those issues is a cultural-religious dislike for public displays of pride.

In general, as the school students approach their final months or years at school, they reveal essentially traditional values about the emotion pride. Traditional values include "*anything which is transmitted or handed down from one generation to the next*" (Shils, 1981, p.12). Finnish culture embraces polite, industrious, and humble values. Consequently, Finnish people are not concerned with offering grandiose sentiments about themselves. A national self-image encourages people to live simple, peaceful, and uncomplicated lives (Peltonen, 2000, p.266). This traditional culture shapes the student's beliefs.

It could be argued that pride is hostile to traditional institutions like families and schools, emphasizing social connectedness, interdependence, and in-group goals. Collectivist communities, like schools, persistently remind the members of their collective purposes and responsibilities. Pride is often associated with freeing oneself from the encumbrance of accumulated knowledge, social norms, and community ideals handed down from previous generations. It is no surprise that the students believe pride is a desire to be superior to others and not a group attribute for membership. As Raakel explains, "He doesn't look kind or trustworthy as he looks superior to others. I avoid talking to people like that".

Moreover, pride is a challenging posture to embrace if you want to have friends around the world.^v Finns understand the importance of humility and often remind others and themselves of this norm. A well-known example is when a Finn is given a compliment, they will quickly brush it off as 'trivial' or exclaim, 'oh it's nothing.' They do not seek personal attention, and a compliment can lead to such a state of being. To embrace pride involves too many potential harms. This is characteristic of the students interviewed who embrace equality and solidarity. As Otto confirms, "He (prideful male) looks like he is the centre of everything and does not think of others."

Although Finnish culture is individualistic compared with more recognized collectivist cultures, when an individual expresses themselves in a self-assured and dominant posture, as the photographs displayed, the potential of diminishing the value and self-esteem of others is too great. If someone is exceedingly individualistic, they are considered prideful, and as a result, they do not have the identity, affirmation, or support from the in-group. The type of relationship the students expect is one grounded in mutual advantage, that is, two people gain an equal advantage by the relationship. When one person is perceived to be more potent than the other, and this is on public display, pride follows, and the social contract is broken.

The conflicts that arise in daily life due to inequality and a loss of self-sufficiency are conflicts resolved by compromise and negotiation. According to the students, pride is antithetical to cooperation and compromise. The pride posture grants too much importance to the individual, and as a result, equal decision-making is threatened with minimal chance of resolve. Pride creates uncertainty in a relationship that the students would rather avoid. Instead, rule-following is needed, i.e., the social contract, and pride threatens the social contract.

Not surprisingly, one of the functions of the institution of schooling is to encourage individuals to avoid personal impulses if they are at the collective expense. Although Finnish culture generally exhibits an inclination to recognize personal impulses and desires about increasing life enjoyment, teenagers exhibit tremendous respect for traditions and school institutions.

7.2 Greatness and modesty

In terms of aspirations for life, such as popularity or 'standing out from the crowd,' the students believe this is inconsequential and socially stressful. As Aliisa confirms, "I would rather live in peace rather than thinking people are saying this or that about me. I don't think I would be able to handle all that stress".

When the students first viewed a male and female photograph representing the emotion of pride, their reactions were immediate and consistent. They all described the posture as that of pride. On the negative side, the teenagers perceived such a public display of pride as representing those who "brag about themselves." Pride of this sort produces an untrustworthy person, lacking sincerity. They believe the world wants you

^v See, "Independence Day greeting from the President of the Republic of Finland to Finnish expatriates and Finns abroad on 6 December 2020". <https://suomi-seura.fi/independence-day-greeting-from-the-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-to-finnish-expatriates-and-finns-abroad-on-6-december-2020/>

to be "great" like this photograph, which they believe is an example of pride. The students reject this view of life mainly because the social consequences are too significant. As Tanja notes, "People would strangely look at me. It is not normal".

Moreover, none of the students believed that life should concentrate on being the 'best' you or being great at what you do in life in terms of work or other pursuits. As Aino confirms, "Life is not like being the best; it is you achieving your own goals that you set, which is important." There are just too many losses striving to be the 'best' and as Olivia confirms, "If you are the best, you have to be the best all the time, and that is stressful."

If people perceive you as claiming to be 'the best,' another loss would be your self-identity. Aliisa clarifies, "Being the greatest musician or whatever; it's great when people see me as being great at what I do because I have done something that makes people feel good," but there is a downside, as she notes, "with things like that comes the fact that people are not going to know you. You will become anonymous, and that is not what I want because I would like to live just a normal life."

The students realize that being the 'best' in terms of what you do in life is only temporary and to sustain such a title requires more determination than they are willing to give. They are not prepared to 'lose their soul' in the process. As Uke maintains, "I want to be good, but I don't care about being the best. Because I believe there will always be someone better than you somewhere so I don't think that is a realistic goal. I see it as sad, trying to become successful to show some sort of perfection. There will always be someone who puts in more effort than me and knows more than me, so it doesn't matter." Notice here that it is not so much talent but the effort which gets you where you want to go and so the effort can lead to "greatness" but merely a modest version.

Trying to be the best in life is not a goal worth pursuing. It might be a nice dream, but dreams are not reality, and people who live with such a mindset are not happy. Successful people don't see themselves as being the best but are rather self-critical. As Matthaeus explains, "I don't think that great people do that, they don't perceive themselves like that but are rather self-critical. My goal is just to do the best I can and if others see me as successful, then fine. But that is never my goal". The stress and unhappiness that follow a pursuit of trying to the best are simply not worth it. As Otto describes, "If you make a bad decision, you could affect the lives of many people. Being the best would be like that."

The purpose of life is treating people as equal and "having a family with some children." Yrjo confirms his life goals, "To have a good relationship and have kids and have a family." The identity of being a good husband, wife, or parent is far more critical compared to a working title and having the additional label of being 'the best.' As it stands, for these future citizens, being the best is not very motivating.

7.3 Self-Confidence

The students mostly agreed that the pride emotion is not an admirable sentiment to build self-confidence, although sometimes it is 'advertised' as such. They maintain that life achievements are a more positive goal for developing self-confidence. If pride is a consequence of success or achievement, the students maintained that they could not

agree that the achievement was sufficiently worthy for approving self-pride until they identified the person's character.

The students suggest that self-confidence and pride are generally at odds with one another since pride is an extroverted feature of over-confidence. Alternatively, those who are introverted are more introspective and careful about their behavior. For example, introverted people, i.e., quiet and reserved, are less likely to share other people's secrets and are merely more dependable. Proudful people are extroverted, i.e., talkative and loud, and consequently not responsible. This is confirmed by Ditte after seeing the photograph, "He will get people to talk to him and has many secrets he has captured from people so no, he looks too confident. He looks easy to talk with, but he is not trustworthy".

The students associate self-confidence with being more akin to low self-esteem, i.e., feeling a sense of worth, and they consider this to be of genuine concern in Finnish culture. Consequently, developing a sense of pride could generate a better equilibrium and produce more happiness in a society which they confirm seems to be lacking. However, self-confidence should not disregard the importance of humility and learn from others, which the pride attitude disregards.

The pride emotion develops an unhealthy focus on feelings over tradition and social norms. There is an apparent 'slippery slope' with pride that seems to lead inevitably from confidence to arrogance. Moreover, as confidence often equates with being a "good talker rather than a good listener," as Sami suggests, this is a further reason why self-pride should be rejected.

The students also discussed a perceived gender difference when it came to displaying pride. It was deemed that although the female representative in the photograph is proudful, she would probably be a better listener compared with the male figure. Tanja confirms, "The girl is more reliable. Her eyes are gentler. She is a listener rather than a talker". So if gender is an important variable, pride and confidence might coincide favorably.

7.4 Accomplishments

A valid and acceptable reason to be proud would be through some type of accomplishment. This could be in earning good grades at school or being kind or a good friend. In these ways, pride can be a helpful emotion when such achievements have transpired. As Matteus confirms, "I am proud when I have achieved something at school or intellectual, written a text," and as Raakel explains, "When I am kind to others, and I always do my best to be a friend, and that is the best part of me, but I keep it to myself." Successful accomplishments were considered necessary for the participants when making self-efficacy appraisals. The success achieved under challenging circumstances appears to be more strongly related to self-efficacy than is success achieved under little difficulty or challenge (see Lent, Brown, & Hackett 2000). The more the challenge, the more significant accomplishment, and the greater self-efficacy.

The students were committed to upholding a social contact of helping others, not just themselves; moreover, they expect this to be reciprocal. In other words, I help you,

and you help me, and we can both be proud of each other's altruistic behavior. As Anna suggests, "I feel proud of myself if I can make someone else feel better".

Rather than being proud, it was more important to be self-aware. This requires a posture of humility, which means keeping your accomplishments to yourself. Too much self-attention could lead to pride, and students are aware of this. When others recognize them for their accomplishment, their awareness and fear associated with succumbing to pride increases, and immaturity increases. As Matteus maintains, "...being too proud of yourself is not a good attitude if you want to evolve in different ways, because if you are self-critical, then you always want to make yourself better, but if you are completely happy about yourself then you don't grow as a human."

It appears that the teenagers are aware of the 'fatal flaws' of pride, such as delayed emotional growth and immaturity. If they succumb to pride, they are prepared to disguise the emotion because of the fundamental problems outlined.

8. Conclusions

The study reveals a small sample of young Finnish youth who are the next generation of citizens and workers in Finland. They are committed to living dignified and quiet lives. Such a life includes industriousness, responsibility, and recognition for the feelings and lives of others. Although they are cognizant of the pride emotion and its potential advantages, such as bringing happiness to others or advantageous for impressing the boss with self-confidence and securing a new job, they are hesitant to exploit the emotion to realize their life goals. In other words, because of the potential for encouraging self-egoism and harming others, pride is not necessary for living a virtuous and stable life.

Pride represents confidence, which they view as a good state of being, but it is not what they view as a 'real' or 'authentic' confidence. Rather, pride is "awkward," "not normal," "arrogant," and "artificial." To display pride in public is a distortion of being a good, respectable, and trusted human being. The students believe the pride posture shows a sureness that is "smug," "artificial," "false," and "egotistical."

Although there are fewer favorable reactions to pride, some of the students do have more hopeful views about this emotion. The students believe that pride indicates "super-confidence" and "happiness," and as one student exclaimed, "...and who does not want to be happy and confident." Nevertheless, the students believe that pride-confidence is grounded in a mode of "power," and power is always suspect because it is not impartial but yields inequality. That said, pride is sufficiently visible, and so people can see it and can make up their minds to reject or embrace it.

This study raises several questions for forthcoming examination. What would it take for these Finnish school students to ignore their collective obligations and pursue more individualistic goals? Does gender play an important role with an acceptance of pride as a constructive emotion to adopt and display?

These questions make it important to conduct further study on pride and with school students in other cultures and countries. It might just be the case that in a global educational world, Finnish school students are no different in terms of an acceptance and

rejection of particular emotions compared with school students in other nations. Moreover, schools by their very nature are collectivist institutions who rely on sustaining a healthy social capital to function properly. Students are brought together to sing songs with one another, read and reflect on material together, learn to respond in specific, predictable ways together, study in groups, and sit for exams together, but they are also in an environment where competition and success is ever-present. However, in small communities, and this study showcases a school where members are rooted in small neighboring groups, healthy relations remain important due to regular interactions between members, compared to environments with larger communities where due to the limits of time, members are afflicted with persisting emotional instability (Holmes and Wynne, 1989. p. 240).

In joining with others in culture with a shared set of norms, beliefs, ideas, and social practices, these Finnish students represent a cohort of future citizens who do not see the importance of locating themselves in something more extensive or more enduring than established traditions and values of equality and humility. As individuals, which they undoubtedly are, they will not ultimately flourish as individuals unless they invest in and draw from their more prosperous social-cultural network.

In short, although schools are historically powerful tools for creating vertical power structures and dislodging young people from their traditional cultures, beliefs, and values, this sample of Finnish high school students show themselves to be part of a human-centric education that is committed to independent thought, achievement, faith, and family but not at the expense of quashing the social capital needed to share resources, energy, and confidence and to understand themselves as individuals who also represent a communal life together in successful and uncertain times. The educational world can learn from the beliefs and values of this small example of Finnish high school students.

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The author has no conflicts of interest to declare. There is no financial interest to report. I certify that the submission is my original work and is not under review at any other publication and I have no commercial associations that might pose a conflict of interest in connection with the submitted research article.

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Appendix 1: Pride Posture: UBC Emotions Lab



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