

11-25-2025

Divorcees' Experiences of Hubristic Pride in Communication in Previous Marital Relationships

Amanda Harms
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Social Psychology Commons](#)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Psychology and Community Services

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Amanda Harms

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Chet Lesniak, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Kerri Nottingham, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2025

Abstract

Divorcees' Experiences of Hubristic Pride in Communication in Previous Marital
Relationships

by

Amanda Harms

MA, Ottawa University, 2016

BS, Liberty University, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

November 2025

Abstract

Poor communication practices have significantly strained marital relationships, contributing to increased divorce rates in the United States. As a self-conscious emotion, hubristic pride often leads to poor communication, which in turn exacerbates marital discord and contributes to the breakdown of families. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how divorcees perceive the impact of hubristic pride on communication in their previous marriages. The theoretical framework underpinning this study was Homans's social exchange theory. Data were obtained from eight divorced participants not actively involved in ongoing custody proceedings through semistructured interviews and analyzed using Saldaña's descriptive coding methodology. Findings revealed four main themes: emotional immaturity, defense mechanisms, emotional reactivity, and unhealthy interactions. Grounded in emotional immaturity, hubristic pride functioned as a defense mechanism that heightened emotional reactivity and disrupted healthy communication. These findings may promote positive social change by increasing awareness of maladaptive communication patterns, fostering emotionally responsive dialogue within families. It may also inform counseling practices in the development of relational education curricula designed to enhance clients' interpersonal functioning.

Divorcees' Experiences of Hubristic Pride in Communication in Previous Marital
Relationships

by

Amanda Harms

MA, Ottawa University, 2016

BS, Liberty University, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

November 2025

Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my husband and children for the support and love they have given me throughout this entire process. Most importantly, this paper is dedicated to the One who put me on this path and guided me through this journey. You started me on this path early in my endeavors and never left my side. Thank You, for all You have done for me.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Chet Lesniak, Dr. Kimberly McCann, and Dr. Kerri Nottingham for their invaluable expertise and guidance throughout the dissertation process. Your support and encouragement have been instrumental, and I could not have achieved this without your help.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background	2
Problem Statement	5
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Question	7
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Nature of the Study	8
Definitions.....	10
Assumptions.....	10
Scope and Delimitations	10
Limitations	12
Significance.....	13
Summary	14
Chapter 2: Literature Review	16
Literature Search Strategy.....	20
Theoretical Framework.....	22
Literature Review Related to Key Concepts.....	26
Hubristic Pride	26
Hubristic Pride as a Self-Conscious Emotion.....	28
Facets of Hubristic Pride.....	29

Social Rank and Relationships.....	40
Attribution and The Dark Triad	42
Communication.....	51
Divorce and Relationship Satisfaction in Communication	82
Summary and Conclusions	86
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	91
Research Design and Rationale	91
Role of the Researcher	94
Methodology.....	97
Participant Selection	97
Instrumentation	99
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection.....	101
Data Analysis Plan.....	103
Trustworthiness.....	106
Credibility	106
Transferability.....	107
Dependability.....	108
Confirmability.....	109
Ethical Procedures	110
Summary.....	111
Chapter 4: Results	114
Setting.....	115

Demographics	115
Data Collection	117
Data Analysis	118
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	120
Credibility	120
Transferability.....	120
Dependability	121
Confirmability.....	122
Results.....	122
Theme 1: Emotional Immaturity.....	123
Theme 2: Defense Mechanisms/Hubristic Pride.....	128
Theme 3: Emotional Reactivity	133
Theme 4: Unhealthy Interactions.....	136
Discrepancies	141
Summary	141
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	143
Interpretation of the Findings.....	143
Theme 1: Emotional Immaturity.....	144
Theme 2: Defense Mechanisms	146
Theme 3: Emotional Reactivity	150
Theme 4: Unhealthy Interactions.....	153
Limitations of the Study.....	156

Recommendations.....	158
Model of Emotional Disengagement	159
Implications.....	161
Conclusion	162
References.....	164
Appendix A: Participation Invitation Letter	200
Appendix B: Interview Protocol.....	202

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographic Information..... 117

Table 2. Themes, Categories, and Illustrative Participant Responses 123

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Pride is a self-conscious human emotion that arises from social interactions. It is not contingent on the physical events of those interactions but rather on how the individual evaluates or interprets those events (Tracy & Robins, 2007b). When interpreted from a negative standpoint, it is characterized as hubristic pride. Hubristic pride is known as a negative self-conscious emotion (Castonguay et al., 2015; Dickens & Robins, 2022; Tangney & Fischer, 1995; Tracy & Robins, 2007a) that detrimentally impacts relationships (Carver et al., 2010; Krettenauer & Casey, 2015; Mercadante & Tracy, 2022; Tracy & Robins, 2007b). In the context of utilizing hubristic pride in relationships, individuals employ verbal and nonverbal communication to assert control (Tracy et al., 2023), manipulate situations (Thamboo, 2022), and conceal their insecurities, often attempting to project confidence they generally lack (Dickens & Robins, 2022). Although hubristic pride is used as a means of communication, research on how it affects communication within relationships was scarce. Examining the influence of hubristic pride on communication may assist counseling professionals in identifying instances of hubristic pride during couples' interactions, thereby facilitating positive changes in their relationship.

In this qualitative study, I explored divorcees' experiences of hubristic pride and how it affected communication in their previous marital relationships. Specifically, I explored the participants' perceptions of hubristic pride within themselves and their spouse. I aimed to analyze the participants' emotional, verbal, and nonverbal responses toward their spouse, as well as their perceptions of their spouse's verbal and nonverbal

reactions toward them. This study was intended to illuminate the impact of hubristic pride on communication, catalyzing further research to enhance relationship well-being. In this chapter, I discuss the background, summarizing the research literature and describing the gap in the literature. I present the problem statement, highlighting its prevalence and significance within the field of social psychology. The purpose of this study is outlined, including the research paradigm and intent. The research question is stated, along with the theoretical framework, which explains the relevant theory and its connection to this study. I describe the nature of the study, offering a rationale for investigating how hubristic pride affects communication, and detail the methodology that was employed. Key definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations of this study are also discussed. Finally, the significance of this study is addressed, emphasizing its potential contributions to advancing knowledge in social psychology and its possible implications. Additionally, I provide a concise overview of the literature concerning hubristic pride and its impact on communication within the context of adult divorced individuals and their previous marital relationships.

Background

Given the widespread occurrence of divorce in contemporary society, researchers have investigated its diverse causal factors. Many of these influences include finances, mental illness, lack of empathy, dark personality traits, addiction, and communication problems (Bland & McQueen, 2021; Noghani et al., 2021; Othman et al., 2021; Thadathil & Sriram, 2020; Yu et al., 2020). An underlying thematic motif underpins these phenomena. Known as a self-conscious emotion (Castonguay et al., 2015; Tangney &

Fischer, 1995; Tracy & Robins, 2007a), hubristic pride often surfaces in those with narcissistic and Machiavellian tendencies (Han et al., 2022; Holbrook et al., 2014; Tracy et al., 2009). It is employed to acquire or enhance social status by asserting dominance within relationships (Cheng et al., 2013; Holbrook et al., 2014; Tracy et al., 2023).

Scholars have also explored hubristic pride in relation to contempt (Gottman & Levenson, 1999; Schriber et al., 2017), envy (Lange & Crusius, 2015), and dishonesty within relationships (Mercadante & Tracy, 2022).

Mercadante and Tracy (2022) researched individuals who, driven by hubristic pride, resorted to dishonesty to enhance their social status. Mercadante and Tracy emphasized the need for additional research on prideful individuals who justify their dishonest behaviors within real-life contexts. Tracy et al. (2023) highlighted the potential benefits of investigating the frequency with which individuals exhibit each facet of pride. Dickens and Robins (2022) agreed that further exploration of hubristic pride across various relationship contexts is necessary to better understand how individuals employ it as a defense mechanism against negative emotions. Furthermore, Kusano (2024) asserted that although pride research has predominantly focused on individuals, there is a need for additional investigation within an intergroup context. These researchers advocated for additional research in contexts beyond those previously explored.

Although extensive research existed on the impact of hubristic pride on marital communication, there was a noticeable gap in studies examining hubristic prideful communication within marital contexts. I searched multiple databases, but the literature did not clearly indicate that hubristic pride affecting communication within marriage had

been studied. In my search across PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycEXTRA, and PsycINFO, I did not find any articles that addressed the intersection of hubristic pride, communication, and marriage. The study of hubristic pride and communication produced findings related to the dark traits: narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. Further research into the dark triad traits revealed that hubristic pride in behaviors, including communication, is connected to diminished relationship functioning (Carver et al., 2010; Lanciano & Curci, 2021; Thamboo, 2022; Tracy et al., 2009; Yu et al., 2020).

Other studies contributed to understanding communication within relationships. The results showed that good communication enhances marital happiness, whereas poor communication raises the chances of divorce (Firat & Okanlı, 2019; Gottman & Gottman, 2017; Othman et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2018; Sinha et al., 2021). Additionally, communication is influenced by other factors (Karantzas et al., 2023; Yıldız-Önal & Uçar) including emotions (Lee et al., 2023). Given that hubristic pride is a self-conscious emotion (Castonguay et al., 2015; Dickens & Robins, 2022; Tangney & Fischer, 1995; Tracy & Robins, 2007a), it inevitably impacts communication. This gap in the research provoked underlying questions. Moreover, van Osch et al. (2018) contended that additional research is warranted regarding the multifaceted dimensions of pride within the social context of relationships. My investigation of how hubristic pride impacts communication among divorcees may contribute to a deeper comprehension of marital relationships and divorce outcomes.

Problem Statement

The impetus that prompted me to search the literature was that divorce rates in the United States have increased 50% annually over the past decade (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; Williamson et al., 2016). Maladaptive communication significantly affects marital relationships (Heidari et al., 2019; Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa, 2023), and it remains one of the most prevalent factors pertaining to marital dissolution (Gottman & Levenson, 2002; Sinha et al., 2021). Maladaptive communication is preceded by emotion (Hooper et al., 2017; Jacoby et al., 2017; Septianto et al., 2020). Hubristic pride is recognized as a detrimental emotion (Tracy & Robins, 2007b) contributing to communication challenges within relationships (Kusano, 2024). Tracy and Robins (2007b), who identified the facets of hubristic pride, observed its diverse manifestations as arrogance, conceitedness, egotism, pompousness, snobbishness, smugness, and being stuck-up. Tracy et al. (2023) elucidated how these expressions of hubristic pride emerge as individuals seek to assert control within a relationship. Additionally, Tracy et al. asserted that the emotion of hubristic pride is pivotal in modifying social relationships because it corresponds to an individual's endeavors to attain social status.

Hubristic pride impedes effective communication within social relationships. Kusano's (2024) study explained that hubristic pride is inversely related to cooperation, demonstrating the essential role of effective communication in fostering cooperative behaviors. The problem is that maladaptive communication, fueled by hubristic pride, undermines marital relationships by inhibiting effective communication. Existing

research on the impact of hubristic pride on communication within marital relationships was limited. The current study aimed to contribute to the development of novel therapeutic strategies and targeted interventions designed to prevent antisocial behavior, enhance relationship dynamics, and mitigate divorce rates.

Per social science, marriage and family are the core social units within human societies (Center for Family & Human Rights, n.d.). With divorce rates at 50%, it is crucial to recognize that society is experiencing substantial and adverse consequences due to the dissolution of numerous social units. The development of a new therapeutic approach targeting the mitigation of hubristic pride to enhance communication offers a pathway to bolster positive and effective interactions within marital relationships. This approach aims to facilitate feasible reconciliation, strengthen marriages, and enhance clients' overall sense of fulfillment. Thus, studying hubristic pride and how it affects communication among divorcees' previous marital relationships is essential to helping society.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how divorcees experience hubristic pride affecting communication in their previous marital relationships. I studied the participants' experiences of emotional, verbal, and nonverbal interactions with their spouse, along with participants' observations of their spouse's verbal and nonverbal responses toward them. I anticipated the study findings would provide valuable support to counseling professionals as they engage with couples in addressing communication challenges. Furthermore, the study outcomes may foster improved communication across

marriages as a whole. The existing gap in research indicated that hubristic pride had yet to be investigated in terms of its impact on communication. The impact on society is significant given the decline in marriages and the erosion of social units. Therefore, investigating the impact of hubristic pride on communication was warranted and essential. I aspired for the outcomes of my research to positively impact social units and, by extension, society as a whole.

Research Question

What are the experiences of divorcees' hubristic pride affecting communication in their previous marital relationships?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this study emphasized that interpersonal interactions are dynamic processes enabling individuals to establish and sustain long-term relationships. As the quality of these interactions declines, it became reasonable to inquire about the factors contributing to this deterioration. The theoretical framework supporting this study centered around social interactions, emphasizing the role of perception and emotion. Homans's (1958) proposed social exchange theory posits that relationships operate on reciprocity. For a partnership to thrive, emotional reciprocation must be balanced between partners. Each partner becomes engaged in a system of rewards and costs, which influences their communication with one another. A more detailed description of Homans's theory is presented in Chapter 2.

Over the past 65 years, social exchange theory has evolved by integrating novel concepts, theories, and perspectives from various related disciplines (Ahmad et al., 2023).

This theory encompasses several other theories and models (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Emerson, 1976). However, Cropanzano et al. (2017) contended that more research is needed concerning cognitive interactions. While acknowledging social exchange theory's limitations, Cropanzano et al. proposed that, as an independent conceptual framework, social exchange theory has the capacity to elucidate research findings. Social exchange theory offered an approach for evaluating human perception and emotion categorization within social interactions, including those in marital relationships. Moreover, social exchange theory emphasizes balance in social interactions (Ahmad et al., 2023) through a cost and reward system. Hubristic pride (Dickens & Robins, 2022) could contribute to or disrupt this balance, influencing cognitive processes in social exchanges. To explore the experiences of divorcees' hubristic pride and how it affects communication in their previous marital relationships, I assessed participants' communication within this theoretical framework. I focused on cognitive exchanges, prideful interactions, and the quality of those interactions.

Nature of the Study

To answer the research question in this study, I chose the basic qualitative design to explore the experiences of divorced individuals regarding the effects of hubristic pride on communication within their past marital relationships. This methodology was appropriate to explore participants' experiences by analyzing the data to derive meaningful insights into how they interpret, construct, and attribute significance to their past marital relationships (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Identified by Lazarsfeld around 1925 (as cited in Bailey, 2014), this research design involves systematic data collection

of participants' opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas to construct meaning and interpret experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Grounded in a social constructivist perspective, I explored individuals' encounters with how hubristic pride affects communication in their previous marital relationships and how they make sense of their world (see Patton, 2015). This methodology facilitated an in-depth exploration of divorcees' encounters with hubristic pride in their prior marriages.

The logical connections between the framework and the nature of my study involved positioning hubristic pride as an integral component of social constructs. Consequently, hubristic pride warrants a strong understanding of social dynamics within broader contexts (van Osch et al., 2018). The theoretical foundation underlying the current study is crucial for comprehending how hubristic pride impacts communication among divorced individuals within their prior marriages. Social exchange theory stresses a need to find a balance between social interactions. Individuals determine what qualifies as a reward, what constitutes a cost, and what the necessary elements for effective interaction are. Once these social interactions are perceived, transactions emerge between individuals to restore equilibrium within the relationship. The key to this theory is balance or contentment in social interactions. Hubristic prideful interactions could contribute to balanced social exchanges or disrupt the equilibrium. Hubristic pride is a social emotion that impedes cooperation in social situations (Guevara Beltran et al., 2024; Kusano, 2024), and it could impact relationship connections and communication. Social exchange theory provided the framework for investigating the impact of hubristic prideful communication within marital interactions.

Definitions

Communication: Verbal and nonverbal methods used to establish connections through the exchange, collection, and interpretation of shared information (Schramm, 2001).

Hubristic pride: The *bad* form of pride as defined by an individual being arrogant, conceited, egotistical, pompous, smug, snobbish, and stuck-up (Tracy & Robins, 2007b).

Assumptions

Assumptions are ideas, beliefs, suppositions, or feelings about what appears to be accurate but cannot be verified (Stadtlander, 2015). Assumptions are reflected by the quality of data, which depends on the understanding and meaning communicated in questions and answers, particularly among the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). In this qualitative study, I assumed that my participants would be appropriate representatives of the population of interest and would provide honest and truthful responses. I posited that hubristic pride impacts communication and contributes to challenges within marital relationships. I also assumed that hubristic pride and communication are universal phenomena experienced across all cultures and genders.

Scope and Delimitations

This qualitative study aimed to explore how divorcees' hubristic prideful experiences affect communication within their previous marital relationships. The use of hubristic pride negatively affects relationships (Krettenauer & Casey, 2015; Mercadante & Tracy, 2022). Commensurately, maladaptive communication is common in relationship problems, leading to divorce (Gottman & Levenson, 2002; Sinha et al.,

2021). Both result in significant relationship issues; however, the impact of hubristic pride on communication lacked research. I used Homans's (1958) social exchange theory as the theoretical framework for this study. I considered using Schachter and Singer's (1962) two-factor theory of emotion for this study, given that hubristic pride is a self-conscious emotion (Tracy & Robins, 2007b), because two-factor theory explains the process of an emotional response. Schachter and Singer suggested that when an incident or relationship conflict triggers an awareness, it will invoke an emotion. In essence, the individual perceives the incident, processes it physically and cognitively, and subsequently responds with emotion. However, I chose to utilize Homans's social exchange theory to explore how hubristic pride impacts communication rather than focusing on the emotional response. Partners strive to achieve balance in their social exchanges by evaluating rewards and costs, which essentially reflects their communication dynamics. I wanted to investigate the impact of hubristic pride on communication, particularly its influence on the social exchanges of the rewards and costs system.

This study was limited to interviewing eight adult divorced individuals recruited via Nextdoor Neighbor and Facebook. Each participant had been divorced for a maximum of 2 years or less. I excluded participants who had been divorced for more than 2 years due to memory recall. Kensinger and Ford (2020) described how people remember or recall emotional experiences far greater than normal memories. Additionally, Neusar and Rubínová (2023) found that memory recall is more accurate within 3 months of an event. Although memory recall may diminish over time, the

recollection of events will align with what Robinson and Clore (2002) called semantic knowledge, indicating a more generalized form of recall. Allowing 2 years or less enhanced my participants' ability to recall past emotional experiences accurately. These delimitations may have restricted the transferability of the study results to comparable populations within the United States. However, this sampling is typical, considering the 50% divorce rate (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; Williamson et al., 2016), and the study's findings are likely to be transferable to a substantial population.

Limitations

The primary challenge in this research was recruiting participants who were willing to share their marital experiences regarding the impact of hubristic pride on communication. There may have been ethical considerations regarding the discussion of unwanted or uncomfortable memories that could have caused distress to individuals. People have busy schedules, and finding participants willing to dedicate an hour for an interview on a personal topic may have been challenging, particularly if no compensation was offered. Additionally, I needed to consider the potential for selection bias. The sample population may not accurately reflect the broader population being studied. Self-reporting may have been influenced by biases such as memory recall errors, honesty, introspective ability, and interpretive measures. Consequently, individuals who volunteered for this study probably differed from those who did not—that is, the broader population.

I have certain biases regarding hubristic pride, communication, and divorce. Having studied the concepts of hubristic pride and communication, I have gained a

deeper understanding of how individuals incorporate hubristic pride into their communication. I am more adept at identifying hubristic pride in conversations among individuals. Although I never experienced divorce personally, I know several individuals who have and continue to struggle in their communication with their ex-spouse. These individuals have shared their experiences with me, allowing me to recognize the role hubristic pride played in their divorces. Despite the prevalence of these limitations and biases, I intended to remain cognizant of them and strived to prioritize trustworthiness. I intended to focus on internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity to mitigate these limitations and biases.

Significance

This research has the potential to provide valuable insights regarding the influence of hubristic pride on communication within marital relationships. In this study, I employed a basic qualitative approach to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of divorcees and how hubristic pride affects communication within their prior marital relationships. I hoped this research would stimulate further investigations in this area. I anticipated that counseling professionals may leverage this research to help couples identify instances of hubristic pride in their communication, thereby fostering positive changes in their relationships. Half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022), and considering the myriad challenges associated with divorce (Auersperg et al., 2019; Thadathil & Sriram, 2020; Williamson et al., 2016), this study was expected to offer valuable insights into couples' social interactions related to hubristic pride. Through this study, I aimed to contribute to

positive social change by supporting the preservation of marital bonds, thereby strengthening family units and reducing financial burdens for all involved.

Summary

In this research, I explored divorcees' experiences of hubristic pride affecting communication in their previous marital relationships. In the background section, an overview of hubristic pride and its role in communication was provided. Despite extensive research on the impact of hubristic pride on marital communication, there was a noticeable gap in studies examining how hubristic pride affects communication within marital contexts, highlighting the need for further investigation. The issue of high divorce rates, fueled by maladaptive communication often influenced by hubristic pride, underscored the need for research to develop therapeutic strategies that enhance marital communication. The purpose of the current study was to support counseling professionals, improve marital communication, and address the significant societal impact of declining marriages. Additionally, this study's theoretical framework emphasized the dynamic nature of interpersonal interactions, focusing on social exchange theory, which posits that balanced emotional reciprocity is crucial for sustaining long-term relationships. The nature of the study was outlined, detailing the use of a basic qualitative approach to answer the research question. This methodology aimed at understanding participants' experiences through data analysis, grounded in social exchange theory. Key terms were defined, assumptions were outlined, and the scope of the study was clarified. Moreover, a thorough overview of limitations and biases was provided. The significance of the study was explained, anticipating that this research

would support counseling professionals, improve relationships, and strengthen family units.

In Chapter 2, the literature review is presented as a comprehensive illustration of the study, its problem, and its purpose. The literature search strategy and Homans's (1958) social exchange theory are explained in detail. Homans's social exchange theory is outlined in depth to provide a strong understanding of its fundamental role in the study. Critical concepts related to hubristic pride, communication, and divorce are then presented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the experiences of hubristic pride affecting communication among divorcees' previous marital relationships. Divorce rates in the United States have been around 50% annually over the past decade (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; Williamson et al., 2016), significantly impacting society. Maladaptive communication, often fueled by hubristic pride, is a major factor in marital dissolution (Heidari et al., 2019; Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa, 2023). The current study aimed to contribute findings that could be used to develop therapeutic strategies to mitigate hubristic pride, enhance communication, and improve marital relationships, thereby reducing divorce rates. This qualitative study aimed to understand how hubristic pride affects communication in divorcees' previous marriages, providing valuable insights for counseling professionals. By addressing the research gap, this study sought to improve communication in marriages and positively impact society by mitigating the decline in social units.

Hubristic pride, often referred to as the darker aspect of pride (Yu et al., 2020), can lead to problems at the individual level and in relationships (Carver et al., 2010; Krettenauer & Casey, 2015; Mercadante & Tracy, 2022; Tracy & Robins, 2007b). Researchers have identified hubristic pride as a self-conscious emotion whereby people look at themselves based on how others view them (Castonguay et al., 2015; Dickens & Robins, 2022; Tangney & Fischer, 1995; Tracy & Robins, 2007a). The display of hubristic pride's seven facets, such as arrogance and egotism, contribute to marital discord (Tracy & Robins, 2007b). In some marital relationships, hubristic pride is present

in individuals characterized by dark personality traits (Yu et al., 2020). These dark traits, known as the dark triad, exemplify the expression of hubristic pride. The purpose of learning about such personality traits was to gain an understanding of those who use hubristic pride the most. Additionally, hubristic pride exhibits behaviors found in verbal and nonverbal communication (Hall et al., 2019). How hubristic pride affects communication directly was unknown at the time of the current study, supporting the need for the study.

In the context of this study, understanding communication within marital relationships was of particular significance. Communication is essential to all cultures (Hiew et al., 2016; Williamson et al., 2012). The diverse methods of communication and the factors contributing to effective communication are noteworthy. Communication, defined as the exchange of information through symbols, signs, or behavior, includes verbal and nonverbal forms (Burgoon et al., 2021; Katila et al., 2023; Phutela, 2015). Various communication theories (van Ruler, 2018), such as social exchange theory (Homans, 1958), have explored the complexities of communication, highlighting its role in human connections and the impact of emotions such as hubristic pride in interactions (Tracy & Robins, 2007b). Heightened emotional arousal during communication can hinder or enhance interactions, impacting relationship quality (Lee et al., 2023). Emotional intelligence, including the ability to perceive and regulate emotions, plays a crucial role in fostering effective communication and maintaining healthy relationships (van Kleef & Côté, 2022).

Communication is a complex process influenced by factors such as self-differentiation (Ghanbarian et al., 2020), schemas (Adıyaman & Eğinli, 2023), and personality (Hall et al., 2019), which can positively or negatively impact interactions. Attachment styles (Bowlby, 1969/1984), developed during early childhood, significantly influence communication patterns in relationships (Kansky, 2018). Additionally, affectionate communication fosters unity and kinship in relationships (Hesse & Tian, 2020), leading to happiness and relationship preservation (Floyd et al., 2023). However, its absence can result in relationship dissatisfaction and conflict (Floyd et al., 2023). Capitalizing (De Netto et al., 2021; Pagani et al., 2020), accommodating (Overall et al., 2010), and placing relational bids are universal strategies in relationships that foster intimacy and healthy connections (Gottman & Driver, 2005). Effective communication is crucial for relationship satisfaction and stability (Gordon & Chen, 2016), whereas maladaptive communication styles (Gottman & Driver, 2005), often stemming from emotional immaturity (Mozas-Alonso et al., 2022), can lead to conflict, poor mental health, and potential marital dissolution (Sinha et al., 2021). Moreover, cultural communication styles differ significantly, with Eastern cultures favoring indirect, high-context communication, whereas Western cultures prefer direct, low-context communication (Hiew et al., 2016; Williamson et al., 2012). Communication is inherently complex, and its intricacies become even more pronounced when it plays a role in divorce.

Researching the factors contributing to divorce has been both arduous and overwhelming. The global interest in divorce has led scholars to investigate its causes,

noting that the United States divorce rate has averaged around 50 % over the past decade (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; Williamson et al., 2016), with significant increases following the introduction of no-fault divorce laws in the 1970s (Jiménez-Rubio et al., 2016; Korhonen & Puhakka, 2021). Factors contributing to divorce include economic strain (Bland & McQueen, 2021), parental challenges (Daundasekara et al., 2021), infidelity (Carter, 2018), poor mental health (Brown et al., 2024), addiction (Noghani et al., 2021), sexual issues (Gravningen et al., 2017), and communication problems (Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa, 2023), all of which impact marital satisfaction and stability (Gottman et al., 1998). While these identified causes of divorce represent the tip of the iceberg, it is worth considering whether an underlying factor drives or sustains these causal elements. Exploring the influence of hubristic pride on communication within previous marital relationships may yield valuable insights for addressing the underlying factor. However, it is essential to recognize that this inquiry represents just one facet among several that I anticipated exploring in this study. Moreover, the absence of research on hubristic pride and its effects on communication impedes a comprehensive understanding of its underlying issues. Consequently, no research directly explains the mechanisms through which hubristic pride affects communication. Exploring the perspectives of divorced individuals regarding this concept may serve as a catalyst for further research in this field, ultimately enhancing marital relationships.

Literature Search Strategy

The initial literature search strategy involved multiple keywords using different databases to explore the concepts of hubristic pride affecting communication in previously divorced individuals. The objective of this inquiry was to identify gaps in the existing literature concerning hubristic pride and its impact on communication. Consequently, I initially searched for possible evidence of a theory that explains the concept of hubristic pride and how it affects communication within marriage. However, the evidence was lacking. The search subsequently investigated alternative avenues and sources, contributing to a deeper comprehension of hubristic pride. However, I was unable to uncover any direct evidence regarding the effects of hubristic pride on communication or divorce.

The search process included gathering books, dissertations, and journal articles regarding hubristic pride, communication, marriage, divorce, and the causal influences of divorce. The databases searched through the Walden University Library: EBSCO Research Databases, Thoreau: Multi-database, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, PsycEXTRA, PsycINFO, SocINDEX, Walden University Dissertations, ProQuest Central, and SAGE Journals. Google Scholar was also utilized. The key search terms included: *Hubristic Pride, The Dark Triad, Machiavellianism, Narcissism, Psychopathy, Communication, Marriage, Marital, Couples, Married, Relationships, Divorce, Separation, Break Ups, Factors of Divorce, Reasons for Divorce, Causal Effects, Causal Factors, and Theory.*

The library search commenced with a primary exploration of hubristic pride, marriage, communication, and divorce. The key terms were employed interchangeably using EBSCO, Thoreau, and the four Psyc databases. The search yielded limited results, resulting in only a small number of articles indirectly connected to hubristic pride and marriage. Furthermore, these databases, along with others, failed to yield any substantial theories directly linked to hubristic pride and marriage. The search focused on exploring the impact of hubristic pride on communication within marriage, yielding several results related to marital satisfaction and communication. These findings demonstrate that effective communication significantly contributes to marital satisfaction, whereas maladaptive communication increases the likelihood of marital dissolution (Firat & Okanlı, 2019; Gottman & Gottman, 2017; Othman et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2018; Sinha et al., 2021). In the context of hubristic pride and communication, the search focused primarily on dark personality traits within marital relationships. The examination of these personality traits revealed that the presence of hubristic pride in their behaviors, including communication, is linked to impaired relationship functioning (Carver et al., 2010; Lanciano & Curci, 2021; Thamboo, 2022; Tracy et al., 2009; Yu et al., 2020). Other research findings suggest that communication is influenced by various factors, including emotions (Lee et al., 2023), schemas (Yıldız-Önal & Uçar, 2023), and attachment styles (Karantzas et al., 2023), all of which affect how individuals communicate. These findings suggest that hubristic pride indirectly influences communication. However, the direct impact of hubristic pride on communication remains unknown. Regrettably, there is limited research on this topic, and further exploration is warranted.

Numerous articles explored the causal factors of divorce, prompting further in-depth research into these factors. It is possible that hubristic pride plays a significant role in many of these causal factors. While the research does not specifically focus on causal factors, acknowledging the underlying theme could provide valuable insights into understanding how hubristic pride impacts communication within marriage. Additional articles explored both authentic and hubristic pride, shedding light on the various manifestations of pride and their impact on individuals and their relationships. Extensive research efforts have been dedicated to the study of communication. Several factors were unveiled and discussed to reveal the complexities of communication. Finally, journal articles revealed a link between comparable similarities and differences in both negative and positive marital interactions, impacting marital satisfaction. In essence, positive interactions serve as a point of comparison against negative interactions among married couples, providing valuable insights into the concept of hubristic pride.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that grounds this study is social exchange theory (Homans, 1958). The basic concept of social exchange theory states that relationships are reciprocal. In order to have a thriving partnership, partners need equality when it comes to emotional reciprocation. Developed by George Casper Homans in 1958, the theory was derived from scientific studies such as B.F. Skinner's (1965) operant conditioning and Gerard's (1954) anchorage of opinions study. Homans identified the *reward* and *cost* system in social interactions. Rewards are when a person feels satisfied or gratified with their social exchanges. Homans referred to a cost as an *aversive stimulation* that will

reduce, increase, or produce certain behaviors in the relationship (Homans, 1958). He found that people's interactions with each other used rewards and costs to help create what he termed *distributive justice*. Homans argued that social exchanges would inevitably try to maintain an equilibrium within the relationship, and rewards and costs are a way to help find that equilibrium. Hence, healthy partnerships create reciprocal social interactions by finding equality through the reward and cost system.

Social exchange theory has expanded over the last sixty-five years by incorporating new ideas, theories, and philosophies from several related disciplines (Ahmad et al., 2023). After conducting their systematic review of forty-six articles, Ahmad et al. determined that further research with social exchange theory is warranted. Social exchange theory is believed to encompass several other theories or models (see Cropanzano et al., 2017; Emerson, 1976). Ahmad et al. (2023) explained that many of these theories or ideas have not been thoroughly researched. Some ideas include rules and norms of exchange, reciprocity, resources of exchange, psychological transactions, and values of mutual benefits (Ahmad et al., 2023). In addition, Ahmad et al. posit that while social exchange theory is applicable to behavioral changes, there is a dearth of research focusing on cognitive interactions. Nonetheless, social exchange theory's basic concepts continue to set the foundation for social interactions. Cropanzano et al. (2017) explained that social exchange theory continues to exhibit similarities in all its theories or models. Its main concepts embrace the behavioral and cognitive transactions between people, the resources traded within those transactions, the reciprocity given among the two parties, and the quality shared within transactions. Considering these aspects, social exchange

theory remains widely favored among social psychologists and researchers (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Nakonezny and Denton asserted that this theory works well for relationships, especially within marriage and family (2008). Cropanzano et al. suggested that social exchange theory is its own conceptual framework that is capable of explaining research results (2017). As with many theories, Cropanzano et al. acknowledged its limitations, but for now, social exchange theory seems to effectively address the relevant issues.

Social exchange theory has been applied in numerous studies examining interactions within organizations, the military, and among individuals. In the context of couple relationships, social exchange theory aids researchers in understanding the dynamics of these relationships. In 1978, Strayhorn applied social exchange theory to analyze the issues that emerged in marital relationships (Strayhorn, 1978). He proposed that alignment in marital beliefs and behaviors led to messages being either valued or devalued. The impact of these messages depended on their delivery and reception, particularly if the message was reasonable and not devalued in some way. Strayhorn determined that cognitive restructuring strategies could enhance the effectiveness of these messages. Contemporary researchers utilize social exchange theory to advance relationship enhancement. Pierce (2017) employed social exchange theory to examine the experiences of married individuals who participated in a relationship enhancement program and their perceptions of its impact on their marital satisfaction. Through her study, Pierce was able to identify the influence of communication and conflict resolution on marital satisfaction as a benefit from the relationship enhancement program (2017).

Teike and Sneed (2018) focused on the critical role of motivation in fostering relationships. They utilized social exchange theory to guide their research, exploring how the perception of relationships as lacking personal benefit can undermine the motivation to invest in them (Teike & Sneed, 2018). They concluded that motivation could serve as a crucial skill in building relationships. Furthermore, Clark (2023) applied social exchange theory to analyze her research, suggesting that asexual-allosexual couples may experience distinct relationship exchanges compared to other relationship types. She determined that partner expectations in asexual-allosexual couples may differ significantly, thereby altering their relationship exchanges (Clark, 2023). These studies have advanced the enhancement of relationships, and I aspire to contribute to this progress through this current study.

Social exchange theory finds a balance among social interactions through a cost and reward system. The key to this theory is balance, or some might say contentment, in social interactions. It is believed that hubristic prideful interactions may add to balanced social interactions, or they may disrupt the equilibrium within those interactions. Ahmad et al. (2023) explained that social exchange theory's cognitive processes play a role in social interactions. If hubristic pride is considered an emotion and emotions lead to cognitive processes (Dickens & Robins, 2022), then it is possible that hubristic pride is part of a social exchange. To address my research question regarding how divorcees' hubristic pride affects communication, I assessed hubristic pride within the framework of the cost and reward system. I evaluated the cognitive exchanges between individuals,

focusing on the role of prideful interactions. This included examining the resources involved, the reciprocity between the parties, and the overall quality of their interactions.

Moreover, social exchange theory provided this study with a deeper insight of how hubristic pride affects communication. By examining hubristic prideful interactions of divorcees through the lens of social exchange theory, I addressed the research question by understanding their experiences in previous marital relationships.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Hubristic Pride

Using seven correlational and experimental studies, Tracy and Robins (2007b) were able to delineate two distinct forms of pride: authentic and hubristic. Authentic pride represents the *good* form of pride as defined by an individual being accomplished, confident, fulfilled, productive, worthy, and successful (Tracy & Robins, 2007b). According to Tracy and Robins (2007b), intrinsic pride arises when an individual experiences a sense of accomplishment due to their unwavering perseverance. Authentic pride is regarded positively as it reflects endurance and self-worth. It emanates from an individuals' internal assessment of what they can control or influence (Tracy & Robins, 2007b). Additionally, Dickens and Robins' (2022) literature review provided their perspective on authentic pride, highlighting it as a positive construct. Authentic pride significantly differs from hubristic pride in that it encourages feelings of accomplishment and success based on controllable behavioral factors (Kong et al., 2017; Tracy & Robins, 2007b). This form of pride reflects emotions associated with being in control, responsible, and personable.

Conversely, hubristic pride embodies the negative aspect of pride, characterized by traits such as arrogance, conceit, egotism, pomposity, smugness, snobbery, and haughtiness (Tracy & Robins, 2007b). Similarly, hubristic pride is an intrinsic emotion, albeit stemming from different reasons than authentic pride. This form of pride is associated with effects that are considered beyond an individual's control. For example, individuals with hubristic pride attribute their success to intrinsic factors, not due to perseverance, but rather because of their innate talent (Dickens & Robins, 2022). Their sense of accomplishment arises from their self-perceived superiority (Tracy & Robins, 2007b). According to Dickens and Robins, hubristic pride is viewed as a negative construct that does not correlate with self-esteem (2022). Hubristic pride has been linked to mental health challenges, including anxiety and depression. Regrettably, Dickens and Robins determined that individuals demonstrating elevated levels of hubristic pride tend to exhibit more negative traits when compared to those with lower levels (2022). Additionally, hubristic pride displays negative personality attributes. Individuals with elevated hubristic pride harbor a fear of external judgment, yet they conceal this apprehension by engaging in more prideful interactions (Dickens & Robins, 2022). These studies contribute to the understanding of hubristic pride as a negative emotion.

Furthermore, both authentic and hubristic pride are self-conscious emotions, and both types of pride serve specific purposes. Tracy and Robins (2007b) posited that pride serves as a mechanism for survival and reproduction, while also contributing to the acquisition of social status. Tracy and Robins found that individuals utilize both authentic and hubristic pride as strategies to achieve success, enhance their social status, cultivate

meaningful relationships, and raise well-rounded children. However, they clarified that an individual's authentic or hubristic prideful response is influenced not solely by the situation itself, but rather by their perception of that situation. Overall, authentic and hubristic pride are two distinct self-conscious emotions with similar goals. The way to achieve these goals depends on an individual's self-perception and their interpretation of their circumstances. For this study, my research focused on hubristic pride and its inherent traits, including its self-conscious nature.

Hubristic Pride as a Self-Conscious Emotion

The term self-conscious emotion refers to how individuals view themselves and how they believe others view them. Researchers have identified self-conscious emotions as shame, guilt, pride, and embarrassment (Tracy & Robins, 2004a; Tracy et al., 2008). These emotions influence cognition, feelings, and behavior (Tangney & Fischer, 1995; Tracy et al., 2008). Charles Darwin's book, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, was believed to be the first to explain the concept of self-conscious emotions (Darwin, 1916). Tomkins developed affect theory in 1962, which systematically categorizes the impact of emotions and feelings (as cited in Demos, 2019). Later, Tangney and Fischer (1995) discussed the psychology of self-conscious emotions and how they contribute to theory and empirical research. Tracy and Robins (2004a) asserted the necessity for further research on self-conscious emotions to enhance the understanding of each individual emotion. In recent decades, extensive research has focused on self-conscious emotions. Brown's (2006) study on grounded theory examined shame and guilt. Others studied embarrassment (Kill & Toprakbasti, 2021), and Tracy

and Robins (2004b) used an experimental design to study pride. When examining hubristic pride as a self-conscious emotion, individuals who experience it often utilize it as a defensive strategy to protect themselves from feelings of shame and low self-esteem (Mercadante & Tracy, 2022; Tracy et al., 2009). Using a combination of experimental and correlational studies, Mercadante and Tracy (2022) found that individuals with elevated levels of hubristic pride often experience heightened feelings of shame, guilt, and social anxiety. Many of these feelings ultimately contribute to the deterioration of relationships. Mercadante and Tracy (2022) also discovered that strategic dishonesty poses a threat to relationship status. Additionally, individuals with hubristic pride may deceive themselves by believing they are superior to others, which allows them to mitigate feelings of shame and anxiety (Mercadante & Tracy, 2022; Tracy & Robins, 2007b). In other words, hubristic pride enables individuals to effectively suppress their negative emotions, allowing them to maintain dominance in social contexts. This type of pride is associated with narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. This association is described later in this chapter. At this point, I will delve into the facets of hubristic pride to deepen the understanding of its nature and how to identify it.

Facets of Hubristic Pride

According to Tracy and Robins, hubristic pride is characterized as a negative form of pride, encompassing traits such as arrogance, conceitedness, egotism, pompousness, smugness, snobbishness, and being stuck-up (2007b). I provide the definitions of each trait below and explain the distinctions among them.

Arrogance

According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), arrogance is “an attitude of superiority manifested in an overbearing manner or in presumptuous claims or assumptions.” Researchers described it as a sense of superiority, manifested through pretentious behaviors aimed at asserting their self-importance (Demirbilek et al., 2022; Kleitman et al., 2019). Empirical research indicates that arrogance is widespread across diverse organizations. Arrogance significantly influences academia (Akyol & Evren, 2022; Demirbilek et al., 2022), leader positions, and is linked to a range of organizational challenges (Borden et al., 2018). Additionally, consumerism often leverages arrogance to facilitate product sales (Ansari et al., 2020; Ruvio et al., 2020; Senyuz & Hasford, 2022; Yang & Zhang, 2018). Senyuz and Hasford studied relationship motives and their impact on consumerism. Their study revealed that individuals with strong relationship motives, such as mate attraction or mate retention, are more inclined to purchase products that emphasize arrogance in their advertisements.

Arrogance manifests through a combination of cognitive and social attributes (Cowan et al., 2019; Kleitman et al., 2019). Cognitive arrogance, an internal cognitive emotion, seeks to establish superiority within social relationships by virtue of the belief that an individual’s aptitude and knowledge surpass those of others (Kleitman et al., 2019). Consequently, this form of arrogance engenders feelings of confidence and competence, irrespective of an individual’s actual aptitude. According to Kleitman et al. (2019), arrogance exhibited a positive correlation with confidence, although this confidence was not necessarily justified by an individual’s actual performance. This

implies that confidence alone does not always lead to productive outcomes. As a result, arrogance was associated with decreased cognitive aptitude and performance capability (Borden et al., 2018). Connectively, social arrogance engenders the desire to feel superior in social situations (Cowan et al., 2019). According to Cowan et al. (2019), arrogance poses challenges in interpersonal relationships due to cognitive justifications and a desire for superiority. Individuals displaying arrogance often shift blame onto others for their own errors, exhibit disrespect toward others, and strategically showcase their achievements to gain an advantage over peers (Demirbilek et al., 2022). However, arrogance does not exhibit a significant correlation with success or exceptional abilities. Demirbilek and colleagues (2022) proposed that arrogance serves as a defense mechanism, concealing an individual's vulnerabilities. I will elaborate further on this topic in the section dedicated to the Dark Triad.

Conceitedness

Similar to arrogance, conceitedness entails a sense of self-importance. Merriam-Webster stated conceitedness as “having or showing an excessively high opinion of oneself” (n.d.). Individuals exhibiting arrogance often perceive themselves as more important than others and demonstrate this through both physical and verbal actions (Poggi & D’Errico, 2011). Where does the feeling of arrogance come from, and why does it lead individuals to act on it? In Russell’s article discussing Immanuel Kant’s writings, Kant characterizes self-conceit as a belief in a person’s superiority over others (as cited in Russell, 2020). It may be that conceitedness can arise from fundamental core beliefs, such as the conviction that an individual is more significant and superior to others. If

arrogance involves behaving in a superior manner, then conceitedness can be understood as the underlying belief of feeling superior that motivates such behavior. Seemingly, this self-conscious emotion or cognition arises from a form of self-love. Arbitrary as it seems, it represents the concept of self-love expressed in a conceited manner. While most self-love is characterized by compassion, self-conceit asserts a focus on self-satisfaction (Rinne, 2018; Russell, 2020). Russell (2020) asserted that Kant believed both self-love and self-conceit serve as motivators for human behavior; however, self-conceit specifically aims to fulfill the desire for superiority.

Notably, conceitedness influences various facets of life, including the pursuit of fame and engagement in nonsuicidal self-injury. Maltby et al. (2008) determined that conceitedness, among other traits, exhibits a positive correlation with the aspiration for fame. Another study associated self-conceitedness and egotism with nonsuicidal self-injuries, including behaviors like cutting, burning, or hitting (Wenlin et al., 2023). Although these findings may not be surprising, it remains intriguing to explore how conceitedness influences human behavior.

Furthermore, the notion of conceitedness fosters the belief or sensation of superiority, thereby empowering arrogance to manifest. In other words, conceitedness represents the fundamental conviction of believing or feeling superior to others, whereas arrogance manifests as behavior aimed at demonstrating that superiority.

Egotism

Egotistical is “characterized by egotism: having, showing, or arising from an exaggerated sense of self-importance” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Although this definition

aligns with arrogance and conceitedness, it is essential to recognize the nuanced distinctions between the two and egotism. Conceitedness clings to the conviction of self-importance (Dolinski et al., 2023), whereas arrogance manifests this belief through displays of superiority (Demirbilek et al., 2022; Kleitman et al., 2019). In contrast, egotism's self-absorbed and self-centered demeanor employs specific behaviors to uphold or restore its sense of importance. Known as having an ego, a person with egotistical tendencies will engage in actions that serve their self-interest and contribute to upholding their reputation. Dolinski et al. (2023) referred to this phenomenon as the egotistic trap, wherein an individual, driven by egotism, complies with a request to preserve their perceived self-importance within society

Researchers propose different types of egotism or egoism. Although egotism and egoism have distinct meanings, both concepts fundamentally pertain to self-centeredness. Egotism involves the conviction that an individual holds greater importance than others, whereas egoism pertains to the belief that an individual's desires carry more significance than those of others (Kumar, 2011). I will refer to both concepts. Defensive egotism, also known as rational egoism, characterizes individuals who primarily focus on their own interests and are resistant to receiving criticism from others (Simon et al., 2017). Individuals of this nature perceive the need to safeguard their ego or self-importance in order to maintain their superior demeanor. Psychological egoism is the idea that individuals are driven by their self-centered desires and, ultimately, their own self-interest (Batson, 2022; Bocian & Wojciszke, 2014; Gantt & Williams, 2021, as cited in Feinberg, 2007). This reiterates the notion that people will behave according to their self-

interests to help them preserve their self-importance. Implicit egotism asserts that individuals possess an inherent desire to enhance their self-esteem and will engage in behaviors aligned with that desire (Boyd & Robinson, 2015; Pelham et al., 2002). This concept suggests that egoistic individuals seek to appease their subconscious to feel justified by their actions. Apparently, individuals exhibit a subconscious preference for things associated with themselves, such as residing in locations whose names begin with the same letter as their own (Boyd & Robinson, 2015). Subsequently, individuals with an egotistical disposition may seek to rationalize their actions when experiencing guilt (Chang, 2014) or distress (Carrera et al., 2013). According to Chang, when egotistical individuals perform altruistic acts, there typically exists an underlying motivating benefit for their benevolent behavior (2014). This practice serves to alleviate the guilt linked to societal norms. Similarly, Carrera et al. asserted that individuals experiencing distress seek relief through actions aimed at mitigating their suffering, which is not necessarily driven by empathy or altruistic motives (2013).

Egotism extends beyond mere self-absorption or self-centeredness. Similar to conceitedness, it involves the need to feel significant; however, egotism encompasses the actions and behaviors undertaken to maintain that sense of importance. It is a selfish desire to where individuals prioritize their own needs, assist others primarily for personal gain, and alleviate their own suffering as a strategic advantage.

Pompousness

Three definitions of the word pompous were presented in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary. According to Merriam-Webster, pompous is “excessively elevated or

ornate; having or exhibiting self-importance; relating to or suggestive of pomp or splendor” (n.d.). Another definition for pompous is “[c]haracterized by excessive self-esteem or exaggerated dignity; pretentious” (Pompous, n.d.). According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the word pompous stems from the late 14th century and is “characterized by exaggerated self-importance or an ostentatiously dignified style” (Harper, 2020, para. 1). Nonscholarly sources often describe pompous behavior as an expression of self-importance, albeit conveyed with dignified mannerisms (Flleva, 2021; Wordnik, n.d.). Dignified mannerisms encompass behaviors or speech that convey superiority over others. Pompous behavior is characterized by an exaggerated sense of self-importance, often leading to pretentiousness and offensive attitudes (Flleva, 2021). I share these characteristics from various websites because scholarly research on pompous behavior remains limited. Many scholarly articles depict analyses of pompous medical doctors and their poise with patients (Catto, 2005; Spence, 2014; Warren, 1999), as well as jargon prose written in both academia and literature (Demir, 2019; Edler, 1994; Poole, 2007). Subsequently, the term pompous is often associated with traits such as arrogance, egotism, smugness, and snobbishness. Though often conflated, these terms are not entirely synonymous. Pompousness conveys a sense of self-importance through verbal expressions and observable behaviors. Although arrogance generally leads to overt emphasis on superiority, egotistical individuals maintain their sense of superiority through their behavior. In contrast, pompous individuals convey their superiority through dignified mannerisms. In essence, pompous individuals convey their desire for respect through both verbal communication and observable behaviors.

Smugness

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, smug means “highly self-satisfied; trim or smart in dress; scrupulously clean, neat, or correct” (n.d.). The hubristic expression for behaving smugly involves a sense of self-satisfaction, encompassing contentment with an individual’s thoughts, behaviors, and emotions (Stohr, 2023). Individuals who exhibit smugness tend to be complacent, comfortable in their thoughts and actions, and are characterized by egotism and self-satisfaction (Arlow, 1957; Brodsky, 2004). Viewed through a Kantian lens, Stohr (2023) contends that smug individuals exhibit an inappropriate partiality toward their own judgments and behaviors. She asserts this impropriety arises because their self-satisfaction is rooted in a sense of self-importance. According to Arlow (1957), smug individuals do not overtly display spitefulness or meanness toward others; instead, they often exhibit withdrawal and appear content with minimal needs. Additionally, smug individuals exhibit a sense of independence and appear unaware of their environment (Arlow, 1957). According to other researchers, smugness is considered a vice, and individuals displaying this attitude may conceal a lack of confidence beneath their smug demeanor (Lenman, 2014; Stohr, 2023). Consequently, smug individuals harbor an inherent egotistical attitude, enabling them to find contentment in their thoughts and behaviors. They typically exude self-confidence and steadfastly defend their reasoning.

Snobbishness

The term snob is knowingly explained by Merriam-Webster dictionary as “one who blatantly imitates, fawningly admires, or vulgarly seeks association with those

regarded as social superiors; one who tends to rebuff, avoid, or ignore those regarded as inferior; one who has an offensive air of superiority in matters of knowledge or taste” (n.d.). Snobbish individuals, associated with the belief of superiority, tend to align themselves with a group of elitists. Elitists are individuals who are perceived as socially superior due to their wealth, social status, and high intellectual abilities (Jarness & Flemmen, 2019). According to Jarness and Flemmen (2019) snobbish individuals, driven by feelings of superiority, tend to gravitate toward the elite. John Mayer, a psychologist at the University of New Hampshire, posited that snobbish individuals, due to their self-assuredness, perceive themselves as superior to others (Waldman, 2009, May 1). Leon Seltzer, a clinical psychologist based in California, stated that individuals exhibiting snobbish behavior tend to treat others with disdain (Waldman, 2009, May 1). This phenomenon occurs because individuals exhibiting snobbish tendencies experience aversion toward those they perceive as inferior, believing that such individuals diminish their own perceived self-worth.

The elite, often referred to as *highbrows*, perceive themselves as superior to others due to their social status (Peterson & Kern, 1996). In 1956, Van Den Haag explored the concept of snobbery, highlighting that individuals with snobbish tendencies leverage their attitude to acquire prestige and social standing (Van Den Haag, 1956). He asserted that snobbery could manifest in diverse contexts, including education, politics, and interpersonal relationships. The snobbish person’s behaviors aim to acquire prestige and achieve success within those situations. In a shift away from snobbishness, many high-status individuals are now referred to as *omnivore elitists*. Coined by Richard Peterson

(1992), cultural omnivorousness represents the idea that people are choosing more than just elite status; they are choosing to participate in popular culture and ideals (de Vries & Reeves, 2022; O'Brien & Ianni, 2023). However, the implications of this choice remain uncertain.

Stuck-Up

The last facet of hubristic pride is stuck-up. When researching its definition, I found this type of pride encompasses all forms of hubristic pride. Both the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (n.d.) and the American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language (n.d.) stated that stuck-up is a form of snobbishness and conceitedness. Oxford Lerner's Dictionary stated that stuck-up means "thinking that you are more important than other people and behaving in an unfriendly way towards them" (Oxford University Press, 2024). Cambridge University Press & Assessment reported stuck-up as being "too proud and considering yourself to be very important; acting as if you are more important than other people" (2024). According to Microsoft's A.I. Copilot the distinction between snobbish and stuck-up is that snobbish denotes arrogance and pretentiousness, whereas stuck-up is a broader term encompassing haughtiness and superiority (Microsoft, 2024). A snobbish attitude is more specific, as it pertains to the aspiration for social status. It seems that possessing a stuck-up attitude encompasses all the elements associated with hubristic pride.

Collectively, each facet underscores the significance of asserting superiority over others, with subtle distinctions existing between them. I will provide a concise summary of each facet to enhance understanding. Arrogance involves asserting superiority, with

individuals displaying specific behaviors to demonstrate their elevated status over others (Demirbilek et al., 2022; Kleitman et al., 2019). Conceitedness refers to the conviction or emotional sense of being superior, which subsequently fuels arrogance (Rinne, 2018; Russell, 2020). Egotistical individuals use behaviors to maintain their self-importance (Dolinski et al., 2023). Those with a pompous attitude convey their significance through dignified mannerisms, including their attire and speech (Flleeva, 2021). Individuals exhibiting a smug attitude often experience self-satisfaction regarding their thoughts and behaviors (Stohr, 2023). Snobbishness predominantly entails associating with and aligning oneself to socially superior groups (Jarness & Flemmen, 2019). Finally, being stuck-up denotes conviction or an emotional sense of superiority while associating with like-minded individuals (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2024). It may also incorporate several other aspects of hubristic pride, such as maintaining self-importance, exhibiting dignified mannerisms, and experiencing self-satisfaction (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, n.d.; *American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, n.d.). However, it is primarily associated with snobbishness.

Moreover, the purpose of analyzing each facet of hubristic pride was to acquire deeper insights into the essence of pride and its relevance to communication studies. Studying hubristic pride not only enhanced understanding but also enabled the identification of instances where it has hindered communication within marital relationships. One identified instance is social rank or status, which serves as a means to dominate the relationship and achieve desired outcomes.

Social Rank and Relationships

During the investigation of hubristic pride, the concept of social rank emerged frequently. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, social rank or social status is “the relative rank that an individual holds, with attendant rights, duties, and lifestyle, in a social hierarchy upon honour [*sic*] or prestige” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023, para. 1). Tracy and Robins (2007b) highlighted that one of the purposes of pride is to enhance social status. Researchers have observed that pride can play a role in establishing social rank; it serves as a pathway to both prestige and dominance (Bolló et al., 2018; Cheng et al., 2013; Dickens & Robins, 2022; Kusano, 2024; see also Carver et al., 2010; Lange & Crusius, 2015; Tracy et al., 2023; Witkower et al., 2022). Individuals displaying authentic pride tend to pursue prestige, whereas those exhibiting hubristic pride gravitate toward dominance. Using a longitudinal design, Witkower et al. (2022) found robust quantitative evidence supporting a positive correlation between hubristic pride and dominance, as well as a negative correlation between hubristic pride and prestige. Redhead et al. (2019) determined a correlation between dominance and its longevity. Evidently, the perceived experience of dominance does not endure as long as the perceived experience of prestige. Furthermore, employing hubristic pride to attain social status through dominance reveals an individual’s interpersonal cognitions and self-perceptions within a given context (Carver et al., 2010; Tracy et al., 2023). Their underlying motivation stems from a desire for recognition and elevated social standing, especially within relationships.

Hubristic prideful tactics such as arrogance, egotism, and conceitedness, are utilized to establish dominance within a relationship (Witkower et al., 2022). Individuals

displaying these traits often engage in behaviors that belittle others; they may try to threaten and shame their partner (Tanesini, 2018). Additionally, individuals exhibiting hubristic pride may engage in antisocial behaviors, including impulsiveness, recklessness, and irresponsibility (Carver et al., 2010; Ho et al., 2016; Krettenauer & Casey, 2015). These behaviors represent some of the strategies individuals employ to assert dominance within their relationship. Negative attributes are common among individuals who exhibit hubristic prideful tactics, as they may give rise to feelings of anger and contempt (Bradley et al., 2014; Dickens & Robins, 2022; Gottman et al., 1998; Gottman & Gottman, 2017; Schriber et al., 2017). According to Tracy et al. (2009), individuals employing hubristic prideful tactics, such as dominance within their relationships, are more prone to experiencing dysfunctional relationship dynamics. Consensus among other researchers suggests that interpersonal difficulties may arise from the utilization of hubristic pride within relationships (Carver et al., 2010; Krettenauer & Casey, 2015; Mercadante & Tracy, 2022; Tracy & Robins, 2007b). Additionally, in Kusano's (2024) experimental design, he revealed that hubristic pride and dominance do not facilitate relationship cooperation. Individuals who display hubristic pride tend to externally express intrinsic values primarily for social recognition (Carver et al., 2010; Krettenauer & Casey, 2015). Instead of fostering connection within relationships, they frequently employ hubristic prideful tactics to assert dominance to showcase their self-satisfaction in being right.

Regarding social status and relationships, it is evident that individuals who exhibit arrogance, egotism, or conceit often seek to assert dominance within the relationship,

aiming to feel superior and invulnerable (Cowan et al., 2019). Many of these individuals represent the dark triad, employing hubristic prideful strategies to bolster their sense of superiority over others. Exploring the dark triad enhanced this study by revealing the contexts in which hubristic pride is most prevalent.

Attribution and The Dark Triad

How does the expression of hubristic pride impact relationship dynamics? While attempting to address this inquiry, I delved into the concept of the dark triad. The term *dark triad* was first introduced by researchers Paulhus and Williams (2002), which encompasses three negative personality traits: narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. These traits exhibit malevolent characteristics, and individuals who frequently display these characteristics are generally cold-blooded, insensitive, and manipulative (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Paulhus and Williams (2002) asserted that while these traits share certain similarities, they remain distinct constructs. Individuals with these personality types often exhibit the characteristics of hubristic pride within their relationships. Horney, a German psychoanalyst, introduced the concept of the Pride System within her theory of neurosis (Horney, 1950). This concept involves an individual's internalized ideal version of themselves. She suggested that individuals exhibiting neurotic behaviors tend to establish their own rules as a defense mechanism against the external world. She termed this phenomenon *neurotic pride*, wherein their cognitive processes become distorted, leading them to perceive themselves as superior to others. According to their correlational study, Costello et al. (2018) explained how pride serves as a defense mechanism in individuals predisposed to psychopathy. In their

research, it was determined that self-regard or egotism, a personality trait associated with the dark triad, exhibited a positive and significant correlation with hubristic pride.

Therefore, I deemed it essential to gain a deeper understanding of the personality traits associated with hubristic pride and their manifestation in its various facets. It is crucial to recognize that individuals displaying hubristic pride in their relationships may not necessarily have underlying personality disorders. Nevertheless, gaining an understanding of the dark triad can prove advantageous in identifying the role of hubristic pride affecting communication within relationships.

The foundation of the dark triad —narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism—stem from Eysenck’s concept of neuroticism (as cited in Kwon & Weed, 2024). Eysenck, a German psychologist from the 1950s, used neuroticism as a personality trait for his personality scale. Neuroticism encompasses a negative disposition, leading individuals to display emotional extremes, grapple with contentment, and frequently report overall life dissatisfaction (Kwon & Weed, 2024). Individuals with neuroticism tend to hold pessimistic views about relationships and are more susceptible to marital instability (van Osch et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2020), as well as experience marital infidelity (Altgelt et al., 2018; Liebers & Schramm, 2022). Neuroticism has been linked to psychopathy (Thamboo, 2022), Machiavellianism (Ináncsi et al., 2018), and narcissism (Altgelt et al., 2018). Each trait displays egotism, manipulation, aggressiveness, lack of empathy for others, coldness, and emotional abuse (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010; Brewer et al., 2023; Davis & Vaillancourt, 2023; Jones & Mueller, 2022; Liebers & Schramm, 2022; Muñoz & De Los Reyes, 2023). As mentioned earlier, these behaviors

are employed to acquire power or prestige within their relationships (Davis & Vaillancourt, 2023; Thamboo, 2022). Subsequently, research indicates that individuals scoring high on the dark triad traits tend to experience maladaptive relationships, characterized by lower relationship satisfaction and reduced commitment compared to those with lower dark triad scores (Brewer et al., 2023). These tendencies arise because individuals often seek partners who exhibit emotional instability and are more susceptible to manipulation (Liebers & Schramm, 2022). According to Liebers and Schramm (2022), individuals displaying dark triad traits often shy away from complete commitment in relationships due to difficulties in forming strong interpersonal connections. To establish superiority and cultivate prestige, individuals with dark triad traits often resort to deception and avoid forming personal attachments (Muñoz & De Los Reyes, 2023), as vulnerability is uncomfortable for them. Individuals exhibiting dark triad traits often conceal their underlying feelings of insecurity or vulnerability through the display of maladaptive behaviors (Thamboo, 2022). These individuals often avoid acknowledging their insecurities and instead resort to dysfunctional behaviors as they assert dominance or display prestige to others.

Building upon my previous discussion, the dark triad indeed shares several similarities; however, each personality trait within it also possesses distinct characteristics. Understanding this is essential because individuals with dark triad traits often employ hubristic pride in their communication (Thamboo, 2022), and analyzing their distinctions can offer valuable insights into the application of hubristic pride. Acquiring an understanding of these personality traits is essential to grasp how hubristic

pride impacts communication from a more nuanced perspective. I will now elaborate on each of the dark triad personality traits and highlight their distinct differences.

Narcissism

Narcissism is known as the most temperate personality of the dark triad (Clemente & Espinosa, 2021). Out of the three personalities, narcissism is the only one scientifically labeled as a personality disorder in the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Narcissism manifests maladaptive feelings and behaviors, including a sense of superiority, confidence, and the utilization of exploitation, aggression, and egoism (Brewer et al., 2023; Liebers & Schramm, 2022; O'Reilly & Doerr, 2020; Rogoza et al., 2018; Thamboo, 2022). Typically, narcissists perceive themselves inaccurately, harbor a strong sense of entitlement, and desire admiration from others due to their perceived superiority (Thamboo, 2022).

Narcissism is characterized by prestige and a lack of vengefulness. Though psychopathy and Machiavellianism contribute to dominance within relationships, narcissism is primarily associated with prestige (Davis & Vaillancourt, 2023). In contrast to psychopathy and Machiavellianism, narcissism typically does not involve plotting for revenge (Clemente & Espinosa, 2021). According to Clemente and Espinosa (2021), psychopathy and Machiavellianism tend to exhibit vengeful tendencies and do not derive pleasure from others' sense of justice.

In addition to displaying narcissistic behaviors, individuals with narcissistic traits tend to exhibit less integrity (O'Reilly & Doerr, 2020), less compassion for others, will easily end relationships (Brewer et al., 2023), and behave poorly if their self-esteem has

been challenged (Liebers & Schramm, 2022). Both grandiose and vulnerable narcissists exhibit these behaviors. However, most narcissists are egotistic and self-engrossed, and grandiose narcissists tend to demonstrate higher levels of extroversion, dominance, and self-confidence (Kardum et al., 2018; Neave et al., 2020; Thamboo, 2022). Vulnerable narcissists share similarities with grandiose narcissists in feeling important and validated by others (Day et al., 2022; Thamboo, 2022). Conversely, they also experience anxiety, shame, and defensiveness when their self-perception is not mirrored by external validation (Day et al., 2022; Thamboo, 2022). Grandiose narcissists assert their dominance and wield power over others, whereas vulnerable narcissists seek self-protection by acknowledging their vulnerabilities, including feelings of shame (Di Pierro et al., 2023). However, vulnerable narcissists refrain from openly revealing their weaknesses. Instead, when they experience vulnerability, they tend to exhibit anger or defensiveness (Neave et al., 2020), which generally lead to hubristic prideful behaviors.

Individuals with narcissistic, psychopathic, and Machiavellian traits leverage hubristic pride to uphold dominance and prestige within their relationships. Indeed, there exists a positive and significant correlation between hubristic pride and narcissism (Carver et al., 2010; Costello et al., 2018; Han et al., 2022; Holbrook et al., 2014; Tracy et al., 2009; Tracy & Robins, 2007b). Costello et al. stated that hubristic pride is especially “rooted in grandiose narcissism” (2018, p. 3). Advertently, individuals with narcissistic tendencies often experience low self-esteem (Holbrook et al., 2014) and employ hubristic pride as a defense mechanism to deflect feelings of vulnerability and shame (Thamboo, 2022; Tracy et al., 2009). Individuals with narcissistic tendencies often

exhibit maladaptive behaviors due to their reliance on hubristic pride (Carver et al., 2010; Tracy et al., 2009). They strategically mitigate feelings of shame and low self-esteem by accentuating hubristic prideful traits, aiming to convey their modesty and self-importance to others (Holbrook et al., 2014; Tracy et al., 2009). Suitably, both psychopathy and Machiavellianism share these similar findings.

Psychopathy

In the DSM-V, psychopathy is referred to as antisocial personality disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Antisocial personality disorder is depicted as exhibiting a lack of empathy, manipulating others (Brewer et al., 2023; Ogloff, 2006), being dishonest (Jones & Mueller, 2022; Mercadante & Tracy, 2022), having no remorse, and being impulsive (Jones & Mueller, 2022; Kardum et al., 2018; Lanciano & Curci, 2021; Liebers & Schramm, 2022; Wong, 2023). While psychopathy is not explicitly listed in the DSM-V, its antisocial traits significantly surpass those of narcissism. Psychopaths not only display egotism, coldness, and aggression but also manifest manipulateness, dishonesty, and impulsivity (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010; Thamboo, 2022). Their emotionally vengeful nature (Clemente & Espinosa, 2021) leads to interpersonal manipulation and exploitation of others (Thamboo, 2022).

Numerous studies have contributed to enhancing comprehension of psychopathy or antisocial personality disorder. According to Costello et al. (2018), certain individuals with psychopathic traits demonstrate adaptive behaviors, such as fearlessness, which may contribute to heroism and leadership. They also identified correlations between hubristic pride and psychopathy's impulsive trait (Costello et al., 2018). Alternatively,

psychopaths' fearless disposition often results in manipulation and overall poor behaviors (Lanciano & Curci, 2021; Thamboo, 2022). Wong encountered genetic predispositions in individuals with antisocial personalities (2023). Furthermore, research has indicated that individuals with antisocial personalities strategically employ pride to enhance their social standing (Costello et al., 2018; Mercadante & Tracy, 2022). It comes as no surprise that psychopathy is a strong predictor of poorly developed relationships (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010; Kardum et al., 2018; Weiss et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2020).

There appears to be a robust correlation between psychopathy and hubristic pride. Costello et al. (2018) considered hubristic pride as a protective factor in individuals with antisocial personalities. They explained that due to their fearless disposition and absence of guilt and shame, psychopaths employ pride as a defense mechanism to preserve a sense of competency and respect. Lanciano and Curci (2021) determined that psychopaths do not internalize their shame. Instead, they evade it by directing their attention outward, attributing blame to external factors rather than themselves. Understandably, Costello et al. (2018) linked hubristic pride in psychopathy to impulsivity. Other studies align with this finding, suggesting that hubristic pride leads to impulsivity, poor decision-making, and a lack of restraint (Carver et al., 2010; Ho et al., 2016; Wong, 2023). More importantly, both antisocial behavior and the reliance on hubristic pride hinder the development of adaptive and healthy relationships (Costello et al., 2018; Krettenauer & Casey, 2015; Mercadante & Tracy, 2022; Tracy et al., 2009; Tracy & Robins, 2007b). Although many factors associated with psychopathy overlap with Machiavellianism, there are distinct differences between the two.

Machiavellianism

Recognized as the most negative personality trait within the dark triad (Ináncsi et al., 2018), Machiavellianism differs somewhat from narcissism and psychopathy. Named after Niccolò Machiavelli who lived from 1469 to 1527 (Kahn, 1993), Machiavellianism embodies several contemporary ideals, including self-centeredness, a lack of empathy, and the use of manipulation and deceit to achieve their goals. The primary aspects of Machiavellianism are manipulation and exploitation (Brewer et al., 2023; Fan et al., 2023; Ináncsi et al., 2018; Jones & Mueller, 2022; Kardum et al., 2018; Thamboo, 2022). Machiavellians employ strategic manipulation and exploitation to establish dominance in both society and relationships (Liebers & Schramm, 2022; Thamboo, 2022). They take on antisocial personality tactics and impulsive decisions selectively, based on whether they align with their desired objectives (Fan et al., 2023; Jones & Mueller, 2022). Machiavellians do not exhibit aggression akin to psychopaths, unless specific circumstances necessitate aggression (Jones & Mueller, 2022). Another facet of Machiavellianism is distrust in others. Machiavellians who grow up in maladaptive households, characterized by neglectful parents, emotional immaturity, and a lack of warmth or safety, often develop a sense of distrust toward others (Ináncsi et al., 2018). This occurs due to the development of cognitive distortions and schemas, which contribute to the formation of maladaptive personality traits characterized by distrust and pessimistic attitudes (Ináncsi et al., 2018). As a result, Ináncsi et al. explain that they develop a pessimistic outlook toward both people and the world, which facilitates their ability to manipulate and exploit others for their own selfish ends (2018).

Similar to narcissists and psychopaths, Machiavellians employ defense mechanisms to deflect their vulnerabilities and insecurities. Ináncsi et al. (2018) termed these methods as immature defense mechanisms. They include behaviors such as anger, deceit, vengefulness, and contempt for others. Machiavellians employ hubristic prideful behaviors as a defense mechanism to deflect their insecurities (Tracy et al., 2009). According to Tracy et al. (2009), their insecurities prompt them to view others negatively and respond unfavorably to both individuals and the world. Machiavellians' perspectives are external, leading them to attribute their problems to the world. This, in turn, contributes to impaired relationship functioning and marital instability (Brewer et al., 2023; Ináncsi et al., 2018; Liebers & Schramm, 2022; Thamboo, 2022; Yu et al., 2020). Due to their emotional detachment, Machiavellians can adeptly manipulate others emotionally to achieve their desired outcomes (Thamboo, 2022). They tend to exhibit a propensity for short-term relationships due to infidelity (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010; Thamboo, 2022). Additionally, they employ deceptive and assertive sexual tactics (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010), and contribute to communication conflicts (Yu et al., 2020).

Furthermore, akin to narcissists and psychopaths, Machiavellians employ coping mechanisms to conceal their vulnerabilities and insecurities, resulting in adverse outcomes (Ináncsi et al., 2018). In contrast to narcissists and psychopaths, they exhibit high levels of manipulation, exploitation, and strategic behavior in pursuit of their desires (Liebers & Schramm, 2022; Thamboo, 2022). They also demonstrate a willingness to take any necessary actions to fulfill their needs, even if it harms others or results in

negative consequences for themselves (Thamboo, 2022). Given these attributes of Machiavellianism, it is unsurprising that it is regarded as the most severe of the dark triad traits.

The purpose of discussing the dark triad is to enhance the understanding of individuals who exhibit hubristic pride. This exploration sheds light on the darker aspects of personality and interpersonal interactions, providing an alternative perspective for understanding how hubristic pride impacts communication. Furthermore, the study of hubristic pride within the last couple of decades has been vast. It is considered a negative construct (Dickens & Robins, 2022) and, when expressed, contributes to impaired relationship functioning (Tracy & Robins, 2007b). Hubristic pride comprises seven distinct facets, each with its unique way of manifesting. Seemingly, it manifests as a self-conscious emotion, driving individuals to assert dominance in relationships and seek social status (Davis & Vaillancourt, 2023; Thamboo, 2022). Hubristic pride is more pronounced within the dark triad, often serving as a defense mechanism to shield against feelings of insecurity and vulnerability (Ináncsi et al., 2018). Given that hubristic pride elicits specific emotional responses and prompts defensive reactions, examining how it affects communication is expected.

Communication

Communication is described by Merriam-Webster as “a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior” (n.d). Communication encompasses both verbal and nonverbal forms (Hall et al., 2019) and is universally employed across cultures (Hiew et al., 2016;

Williamson et al., 2012). Its intrinsic habitual nature fosters human connections (Gottman & Driver, 2005), and its pervasive influence is profound. Research on this topic is extensive, covering various domains of communication and its impact on individuals (see Burgoon et al., 2021; Adiyaman & Eğinli, 2023; Floyd et al., 2023; Ghanbarian et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2019; Hesse & Tian, 2020; Katila et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2023; Phutela, 2015; van Kleef & Côté, 2022).

Communication theory was first developed by Claude Shannon as a mathematical theory (Shannon, 1948). Over time, communication theory has evolved, giving rise to numerous perspectives that offer distinct views on the nature of communication. van Ruler (2018) explained how communication theory integrates various other theories to enhance the understanding of the communication process. Numerous communication theories exist, encompassing agenda-setting theory, social penetration theory, communication accommodation theory, elaboration likelihood model, the spiral of silence, symbolic interactionism, cognitive dissonance theory, standpoint theory, and contingency theory. Communication is multifaceted, and no single theory can fully capture its complexity. However, this study is about the self-conscious emotion of hubristic pride and how it affects communication. Social exchange theory employs verbal and nonverbal communicational exchanges within relationships. The aim was to assess the benefits and costs, leading to the creation of rewards with minimal risk. Naturally, this theory serves as the foundational framework for my study.

Communication stems from the Latin word *communis*, which means common (Veschi, 2020). Individuals engage in communication to establish connections by

exchanging shared information (Schramm, 2001). Wilbur Schramm is known to some as the father of communication studies. He elaborated that communication is a dynamic exchange in which individuals collect and transmit information, and meaning is constructed through the recipient's interpretation within the relational context (Schramm, 2001). Although the process appears straightforward, its complexity can vary based on multiple factors, encompassing both verbal and nonverbal communication. According to various experts in communication studies, approximately 93% of nonverbal communication is directed toward conveying meaning (Burgoon et al., 2021). Hall et al. (2019) posited that both verbal and nonverbal communication are essential for conveying meaning. In contrast, Burgoon et al. (2021) emphasized the greater significance of nonverbal communication in the communication process, highlighting its crucial role in establishing strong connections.

Utilizing an experimental design, Kraus (2017) investigated voice-only communication and determined that this style of communication enhances empathy in others. He claimed that voice-only communication enhances empathic accuracy more effectively than nonverbal communication. Eckland et al. (2019) provided further insight into voice-only communication by explaining that emotions have a physiological basis, and individuals express these emotions when communicating with others. This means that individuals who experience emotions utilize both verbal and nonverbal communication to express their feelings. Mediation analyses revealed that vocal prosody played a significant role as a mediator between perceptions of individuals' affect and their physiological reactivity (Eckland et al., 2019). This finding corresponds with

Kraus' study which states that voice-only communication can detect empathy in others. Contrary to Kraus's perspective, Rossiter (2018) contended that voice-only communication may not be as accurate as it initially appears. Rossiter extensively explored Kraus' study and identified several critical issues. Rossiter contended that Kraus' measurements do not reflect empathic accuracy but rather empathic deviations (2018). Evidently, Kraus' voice-only communication yielded only a slight advantage over audio-visual communication (2017). Either way, both audio and visual communication play crucial roles in conveying information and establishing connections. Subsequently, given that nonverbal communication is the predominant style of communication, it would be advisable to delve deeper into this mode of expression.

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is used to highlight, supplement, normalize, or replace verbal communication (Phutela, 2015). In her qualitative study, Phutela (2015) asserted that nonverbal communication encompasses a wide range of expressions, including facial cues, physical gestures, attire, and even tattoos. Apparently, posture also significantly influences nonverbal communication. Scholars concur that posture conveys nonverbal cues for interpersonal communication (Phutela, 2015; Van Cappellen et al., 2023). According to Phutela (2015), posture wields a potent yet understated influence. Van Cappellen et al. (2023) stated that individuals can interpret emotions by observing others' postures. Consequently, both Phutela and Van Cappellen et al. explained how posture is related to social status. Those who appear to be cowering and tense are ascribed to a lower social status, while those who maintain an upright and relaxed posture are typically

perceived as having a higher social status. Van Cappellen and colleagues (2023) determined that specific emotions are associated with posture, suggesting that body positions reflect inner emotional states. As an illustration, postures that are expansive or pompous often signal social dominance and tend to be associated with feelings of pride. Though posture represents just one facet of nonverbal communication, it significantly influences the expression of emotions.

Other aspects of nonverbal communication encompass touch, physical actions, facial mimicry, and vocal cues. Physical touch plays a crucial role in establishing connections with others. Katila et al. (2023) highlighted the essential role of touch in human health and interpersonal connections. They contended that physical touch not only conveys emotions but also fosters social connections. Carmichael and Mizrahi (2023) agreed that touch improves relationships. Regrettably, the adverse consequences of touch are sometimes wielded as tools of control and dominance, which can profoundly unsettle those who encounter them (Kolehmainen & Kinnunen, 2019). These studies indicate that touch serves as a potent tool for expressing an individual's emotions.

Verbal communication gains depth and nuance through physical actions. According to Hall et al. (2019), comprehending the complete meaning of communication necessitates considering both nonverbal and verbal elements in tandem. Gestures play a crucial role in nonverbal communication, and when combined with verbal communication, they enhance the impact of the message for the recipient (Hall et al., 2019). Facial mimicry, a component of physical actions, involves mirroring another person's facial expressions. Carmichael and Mizrahi (2023) emphasized that facial

mimicry plays a crucial role in fostering and maintaining relationships. According to their literature review, recognizing an individual's emotions through facial expressions can mitigate conflict and enhance relationship satisfaction. Therefore, when verbal communication is complemented by nonverbal cues, it fosters connection and builds trust (Carmichael & Mizrahi, 2023).

Vocal cues are also considered nonverbal communication. According to Hall et al. (2019), nonverbal communication encompasses physical gestures and vocal cues, excluding any type of verbal content. Katila et al. (2023) used a supervised machine learning approach combined with causal inference and matching models to describe vocal cues as interjections. Katila et al. investigated the work of John Gottman, a prominent marriage and family psychologist, whose findings on vocal responses shed light on how cues are employed to convey different emotions and sensations. These cues frequently signal an awareness of an individual's bodily sensations and serve as effective means of expressing emotions (Carmichael & Mizrahi, 2023). For instance, vocal cues such as *Hmm.*, *Ahh!*, and *Oh!* are among the shared expressions. In their research, Katila et al. (2023) discerned subtle differences between sensuality cues and distress cues. Carmichael and Mizrahi (2023) found that nonverbal communication, when considered independently, elicited more responses and fostered greater trust from others. These findings underscore the significance of combining physical gestures with vocal cues in an effort to send and receive messages effectively.

Coding and Decoding Messages

Effective communication extends beyond verbal and nonverbal modes. It encompasses additional dimensions, including the encoding and decoding of messages. According to Hall et al. (2019), individuals who encode messages are referred to as senders. These senders draw upon information from their cognitive processes, which are influenced by their five senses. Additionally, factors such as personality attributes, gender, individual identity, motivation, status, culture, and mood play a role in the encoding process (Hall et al., 2019). The primary focus lies in utilizing the information available to individuals for encoding messages intended for the receiver. The receiver is the individual who receives the message and decodes its meaning. While decoding verbal messages relies on cognitive functioning, the interpretation of nonverbal communication can be rapidly achieved through automated cognitive processes (Hall et al., 2019). Hall et al. (2029) then explained that the verbal component is then processed through the controlled cognitive function. They described the process of receiving the message as interpersonal accuracy. The receiver's perception of a message is influenced by various factors, leading to varying levels of accuracy. Interpersonal accuracy significantly impacts social outcomes, particularly in the context of positive behavioral outcomes (Hall et al., 2019). Various components influence the dynamics of encoding and decoding messages, as just discussed. However, an additional factor involves how individuals engage in both verbal and nonverbal communication. According to Pagani et al. (2020), relationship quality depends on how an individual encodes and shares their message. There are four types of communication styles: active-constructive (AC), passive-

constructive (PC), active-destructive (AD), and passive-destructive (PD) (Pagani et al., 2020). According to Pagani et al. (2020), AC communication increases relationship quality through conveying positive emotions and understanding. PC communication does not increase relationship quality due to its lack of reaction toward the sender. AD communication decreases relationship quality as the receiver hears the message and responds negatively. Lastly, PD communication deflects the sender's message and directs the conversation to something about themselves, thus decreasing relationship quality.

These communication styles mentioned above share fundamental similarities with assertiveness, passiveness, passive-aggressiveness, and aggressiveness styles. These communication styles have been recognized by various experts and researchers over time. Winer et al. (2024) cited Bocar's (2017) explanation of these distinct communication styles. They explained that assertive communication is generally the most effective approach because it involves advocating for an individual's own needs while also considering the needs of the other person. This involves being open, honest, and understanding. Additionally, passive communication encompasses indirectness, quietness, and niceness (Bocar, 2017). Passive individuals often prioritize meeting others' needs over their own. However, this can lead to resentment when their own needs remain unfulfilled. Lastly, aggressive communication also includes passive-aggressive communication (Bocar, 2017). Aggressive communication incorporates several maladaptive techniques to meet the needs of the person being aggressive. According to Bocar (2017), these maladaptive techniques encompass anger, closed-mindedness, manipulation, gaslighting, and a lack of understanding of others. Aggressive individuals

typically prioritize their own needs over the well-being of the person they are communicating with. After studying assertive, passive, and aggressive communication styles using a pragmatic randomized controlled trial, Winer et al. (2024) findings indicate that assertive communication is arguably the most effective approach for minimizing conflict in relationships, whereas aggressive communication is the least effective.

At first glance, communication appears to be straightforward because of its direct and interactive nature between two parties. Nevertheless, both human experience and empirical evidence have revealed complexities in communication, highlighting nuances related to verbal and nonverbal communication. These aspects dictate how the messages are encoded, sent, received, and decoded. I will provide further insights into communication and its impact on individuals and how they emotionally communicate within their relationships.

Emotional Communication

Heightened emotional arousal during communication can lead to less effective interactions, ultimately having a negative impact on relationships (Lee et al., 2023). Conversely, emotional arousal during communication can foster adaptive interactions, enhancing relationship connectivity (van Kleef & Côté, 2022; Weber et al., 2021). Ultimately, the effectiveness of communication, whether positive or negative, hinges on the emotions the individual is experiencing. In their literature review, van Kleef and Côté (2022) discussed emotional contagion, suggesting that individuals tend to mimic the emotional expressions of others. Weber et al. (2021) described this as emotional reciprocity. Emotional expressions are subconsciously mirrored, leading the recipient to

experience the same emotions. This process is referred to as tracking or appraisal (van Kleef & Côté, 2022). van Kleef and Côté (2022) further elaborated on how Emotions as Social Information theory (EASI) describes the way people understand each other through their emotional expressions. According to their assertion, emotional expressions provoke reciprocal reactions in others; for example, when an individual displays disappointment, the recipient may experience feelings of guilt. Emotional expressions can convey dominance and power, submissiveness, self-perception, and how individuals are perceived by others (van Kleef & Côté, 2022). van Kleef and Côté (2022) categorize emotional expressions into four categories: affiliation, supplication, dominance, and appeasement. They explained that affiliative emotions encompass pleasure, generosity, and a sense of safety. Supplication emotions, associated with distressing situations, encompass worry, disappointment, and sadness. Dominance emotions, such as anger and contempt, are aimed at achieving superiority over others. Lastly, van Kleef and Côté explained how appeasement emotions, such as shame, regret, and embarrassment, serve to either strengthen a relationship or prevent retribution for past actions. Additionally, empathy provides a means to understand another's emotions. Shuper Engelhard (2019) defined empathy as the ability to recognize another person's cognitive impressions and emotional state. He also noted that individuals who demonstrate empathy possess a heightened awareness of the physiological states of others. Individuals who exhibit emotional empathy towards others tend to have better communication skills, improved mood regulation, and a higher likelihood of achieving their goals (Ma-Kellams & Blascovich, 2012; Shuper Engelhard, 2019). Empathizing with a partner fortifies

relationship bonds and improves both relationship validation and quality (Shuper Engelhard, 2019). Regrettably, heightened emotional arousal diminishes empathy and heightens defensiveness (Fischer et al., 2019; Shuper Engelhard, 2019).

Emotional reciprocity is linked to higher levels of relationship satisfaction whereas negative emotional expressions can diminish relationship quality (Weber et al., 2021). Accordingly, relationships characterized by high levels of negative emotional arousal are more likely to experience maladaptive communication (Weber et al., 2021). Using a comparative design, Weber and colleagues posited that the functioning of a relationship can, at times, be influenced by the emotional expressions of the couple (2021). In essence, the emotions of each partner influence one another, thereby shaping the overall quality of the relationship. Weber et al. determined that partners in a relationship may find it challenging to meet both their own emotional needs and those of their partner during communication (2021). This adversely impacts relationship quality, as one partner's heightened emotional state is linked to decreased relationship satisfaction in the other partner. These findings suggest that understanding a partner's emotional expressions is distinct from providing support to them through their emotional experiences.

van Kleef and Côté (2022) asserted that emotions must be accurately perceived. Consequently, individuals with the ability to perceive emotions—demonstrating emotional intelligence—are better equipped to respond to another's emotional arousal. Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in assisting others with their emotional experiences (van Kleef & Côté, 2022). This is because emotional intelligence necessitates

both self-awareness and the ability to recognize the emotions of others. It also necessitates effective emotion regulation and application. Individuals who can effectively comprehend others' emotions are likely to enjoy more fulfilling relationships throughout their lives (Ma-Kellams & Blascovich, 2012). However, individuals who lack emotional intelligence, or who may be emotionally immature, might become emotionally dependent on others and potentially experience emotional dissatisfaction (Yıldız-Önal & Uçar, 2023). This dissatisfaction drives individuals to hastily seek intimate relationships to fulfill their emotional needs, which ultimately results in communication issues (Jacoby et al., 2017; Yıldız-Önal & Uçar, 2023). Yıldız-Önal and Uçar (2023) further noted that emotionally immature individuals struggle with setting boundaries and articulating their needs. Furthermore, individuals in enmeshed relationships, or those who are emotionally immature, struggle to distinguish themselves from their relationships (Ghanbarian et al., 2020) and are unable to achieve genuine intimacy and autonomy (Mozas-Alonso et al., 2022). Emotionally immature individuals often struggle with regulating their emotions. Many of them have never established healthy attachment relationships. Individuals with healthy attachment histories are generally more adept at regulating their emotions (Jacoby et al., 2017). Jacoby et al. (2017) noted that poor emotion regulation is linked to interpersonal difficulties and marital conflicts. This is attributed to the inability to shift focus from external situations to internal feelings. Jacoby et al. (2017) further elucidated that emotion regulation mediates the emotional impact of trauma and the use of negative communication.

Ultimately, cultivating emotional intelligence necessitates self-awareness. It involves mastering the regulation of emotions and applying this skill to foster healthy relationships. To foster healthy relationships, an emotionally intelligent individual will maintain a positive emotional outlook and support the emotional needs of others (Adıyaman & Eğinli, 2023). Adıyaman and Eğinli (2023) agreed that effectively regulating and communicating emotions will enhance the ability to resolve conflicts. Consequently, cultivating emotional maturity facilitates effective communication. This is beneficial to understand, but what else contributes to effective communication?

Attributions to Communication

Communication involves conveying information from one source to another through both verbal and nonverbal channels. As demonstrated above, communication is more complex than it appears. Evidently, the dynamics of communication become more intricate when factors such as self-differentiation, schemas, and personality are considered. These attributes introduce significant variability in communication and can be perceived as either positive or negative, depending on the individual and the context. Analyzing the impact of specific attributes on communication can enhance the comprehension of relationship conflicts and overall well-being.

Ghanbarian et al. (2020) discussed the concept of differentiation of self within the framework of Bowen's family systems theory. In their quantitative study using surveys, Ghanbarian et al. were able to explain how differentiation of self involves an individual's awareness of their thoughts, emotions, and the proximity of physical interactions. Effective differentiation of self, integrates both cognitive and emotional intelligence,

fostering healthy and beneficial interpersonal relationships. Ghanbarian et al. (2020) posited that differentiation of self is essential for fostering strong intimacy within relationships. Their research indicated that individuals with a high differentiation of self are more likely to employ healthy strategies to maintain their relationships. In contrast, those with a low differentiation of self tend to use high-risk strategies, making it difficult for their partners to leave the relationship if desired. Therefore, individuals with high differentiation of self tend to utilize adaptive communication strategies, whereas those with low differentiation of self are more likely to employ maladaptive communication methods (Ghanbarian et al., 2020). Utilizing a mixed-methods, longitudinal study, Norona and Welsh (2016) examined how differentiation of self mediates the relationship between rejection sensitivity and relationship satisfaction. They determined that increased feelings of rejection were associated with decreased relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, the subcomponent of self-differentiation, known as emotional cutoff, effectively mediated both rejection and satisfaction. Individuals experiencing emotional disconnection were able to sever ties with their relationships (Norona & Welsh, 2016). Mozas-Alonso et al. (2022) demonstrated the interconnection between self-differentiation and marital satisfaction. In their study, marital satisfaction mediated the relationship between self-differentiation and parental warmth-communication, as well as criticism-rejection and inductive form. Consequently, self-differentiation is linked to marital satisfaction. Individuals with lower levels of self-differentiation often display emotional immaturity, which makes it difficult for them to sustain relationships (Mozas-Alonso et al., 2022).

Yıldız-Önal and Uçar (2023) asserted that having a strong sense of self significantly influences interpersonal communication. Individuals of this nature demonstrate greater commitment in their relationships, exhibit a willingness to resolve conflicts, and strive to fulfill their partner's needs (Yıldız-Önal & Uçar, 2023). In their mixed-methods research, Yıldız-Önal and Uçar (2023) further emphasized the significance of critical thinking and its potential to positively influence behavior. They conveyed how conflict resolution styles, family schemas, personal experiences, and cultural backgrounds contribute to shaping individuals' communication styles.

One such experience is betrayal trauma, which alters brain function and affects how individuals form connections with others. Jacoby et al. (2017) described betrayal trauma as the experience of having an individual's trust violated. Incidentally, children who experience trauma often struggle to form secure attachments in adulthood. Jacoby et al. (2027) used a survey-based quantitative study to determine that adolescents who have experienced betrayal trauma are more prone to exhibit aggressive behaviors compared to their peers without such trauma. Jacoby et al. (2017) noted that interpersonal exchanges are often impaired or damaged by individuals with betrayal trauma, largely due to their deficient problem-solving skills. Schema theory involves acquiring new knowledge, integrating it with existing knowledge, and subsequently assimilating this new information into long-term memory (Smith, 2021). In essence, as new knowledge is gained, understanding evolves, resulting in a renewed perspective on life. In their mixed-methods design, Adıyaman and Eğinli (2023) observed that many individuals develop maladaptive schemas over their lifetime, which subsequently influence their thoughts and

behaviors. They asserted that negative thought patterns, or schemas, are more likely to generate negative emotions, which can hinder human progress (Adıyaman & Eğinli, 2023). They explained that schemas, including those with maladaptive attachments, lack of differentiation of self, and hypervigilance, will have fewer satisfying relationships. Adıyaman and Eğinli concurred that early maladaptive schemas adversely impact interpersonal communication. Furthermore, individuals who develop these schemas are more inclined to engage in aggressive communication within their relationships (Adıyaman & Eğinli, 2023; Karantzas et al., 2023; Şenkal Ertürk et al., 2020).

Schemas are integral to human nature, arising from life experiences and knowledge to shape ways of being and acting. Schemas play a crucial role in communication (Adıyaman & Eğinli, 2023). Although some schemas are maladaptive and lead to discord in relationships, others enhance lives by fostering strong connections with others (Adıyaman & Eğinli, 2023). Additionally, some schemas we develop over time encompass defense mechanisms (Price, 2007). Defense mechanisms, as conceptualized by Sigmund Freud, are employed to assist individuals in coping with challenging emotions (Hedgspeth, 2023). Individuals frequently remain unaware of their use of defense mechanisms (Whiting & Cravens, 2016); however, identifying these mechanisms can be instrumental in resolving conflicts. Various defense mechanisms encompass denial, rationalization, repression, projection, dissociation, intellectualization, victimization, and acting out (Whiting & Cravens, 2016). Employing a quantitative approach, Whiting and Cravens (2016) explain how individuals utilize defense mechanisms to conceal their challenging emotions; however, these mechanisms do not

invariably promote adaptive communication skills. Many defense mechanisms lead to distortions, causing individuals to modify the truth to safeguard their emotions. Whiting and Cravens (2016) noted that individuals often make excuses, deny their mistakes, blame others, and adopt a victim mentality to justify their behaviors and emotions. These behaviors are harmful to relationships, as they reduce relationship satisfaction and can ultimately lead to relationship dissolution (Whiting & Cravens, 2016). Furthermore, defense mechanisms are employed to achieve self-preservation in the face of conflict and violence. In many instances, when one partner engages in maladaptive self-preservation behaviors, the other partner often mirrors these actions (Whiting & Cravens, 2016). Whiting and Cravens (2016) observed that couples in conflict often default to either the victim or perpetrator role. They explained that both roles involve blaming others, rationalizing behaviors, employing denial tactics, accusing partners, and avoiding responsibility for their actions. The couples' cognition and emotions become distorted, resulting in maladaptive behaviors and, ultimately, conflict. From a physiological standpoint, conflict often emerges when the reptilian brain, specifically the amygdala, perceives danger (Whiting & Cravens, 2016). As a result, the sympathetic nervous system, or the fight-or-flight response, is activated to safeguard the individual perceiving the threat. Hormonal fluctuations in the brain can hinder individuals' capacity to listen attentively and empathize with their partners (Shuper Engelhard, 2019). Individuals who adeptly manage their intense negative emotions are better equipped to identify cognitive distortions (Shuper Engelhard, 2019).

Couples who opt for healthy emotional management are more likely to experience clarity and appreciation in their relationship (Whiting & Cravens, 2016). According to Whiting and Cravens (2016), healthy emotional regulation fosters greater personal accountability and improves relationship communication. Physiologically, the brain's fight-or-flight response subsides, allowing the individual to think with clarity and logic. Consequently, individuals who engage in cognitive distortions and maladaptive behaviors often exacerbate their communication difficulties, whereas those who avoid such distortions are more likely to demonstrate adaptive communication. (Whiting & Cravens, 2016). Effective emotional management promotes clear thinking and facilitates robust communication, but this is achievable only through the use of adaptive schemas. Adaptive schemas also foster strong attachment styles, which enhance communication within relationships (Adıyaman & Eğinli, 2023; Gündoğmuş et al., 2023).

Attachment Styles in Communication

Attachment styles significantly influence how individuals communicate. Bowlby developed attachment theory in 1969, defining attachment as an emotional connection within relationships (Bowlby, 1969/1984). Significantly, attachment styles are rooted in early development. Children form their attachment styles with caregivers based on their interactions and experiences with them (Karantzas et al., 2023). According to Bowlby (1969/1984), there are four basic attachment styles: secure, anxious, avoidant, and fearful. Secure attachment involves the capacity to establish healthy relationships characterized by confidence, commitment, and autonomy. Kinsky (2018) employed a multi-method, longitudinal study and noted that individuals with secure attachments in

relationships tend to experience higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Individuals with an anxious attachment style often fear rejection and have a strong aversion to being left alone. Ghanbarian et al. (2020) determined that individuals with anxious attachment styles, driven by their anxious disposition, employ various behaviors to retain their partners. These behaviors encompass both communicative and physical actions, as individuals may attempt to be kind and loving, while also resorting to manipulative and violent tactics. Individuals with an avoidant attachment style typically feel uncomfortable around others and tend to distance themselves (Gottman & Driver, 2005; Karantzas et al., 2023). Additionally, Peters et al. (2018) explained that individuals with avoidant attachment styles lack trust in others and feel uncomfortable with human connections. Fearful attachment occurs when individuals feel insecure and conflicted about their relationships (Karantzas et al., 2023). Considered a blend of both anxious and avoidant traits, fearful attachment may be the most problematic of all attachment styles, according to Karantzas et al. (2023).

Karantzas et al. (2023) examined the relationship between each attachment style and maladaptive schemas. As previously mentioned, schemas are cognitively developed at a young age to help individuals understand the world around them. Karantzas et al. (2023) used a meta-analysis and found that insecure attachment styles—*anxious, avoidant, and fearful*—are significantly and positively associated with maladaptive schemas, whereas the secure attachment style is significantly and negatively associated with maladaptive schemas. This suggests that maladaptive schemas are more likely to contribute to the development of insecure attachment styles. Schemas linked to any form

of maladaptive adjustments or communication will result in insecure attachment styles and, ultimately, insecure relationships (Adıyaman & Eğinli, 2023; Gündoğmuş et al., 2023).

Consequently, individuals with maladaptive attachment styles are more likely to exhibit emotional immaturity (Jacoby et al., 2017) and experience lower relationship satisfaction (Kansky, 2018). Gottman and his colleagues determined that marital conflict stems from poor communication and flawed attachment styles (Gottman & Driver, 2005; Gottman & Levenson, 2002). Gottman and Levenson (2002) presented Wile's (1993) modes of marital conflict as attack-defend mode or avoidant mode. Individuals with insecure attachment styles may exhibit communication patterns characterized by contempt, criticism, neglect, or emotional detachment from their partners (Gottman & Levenson, 2002). Consequently, possessing an insecure attachment style can significantly hinder effective communication within relationships. However, affectionate communication can effectively strengthen attachments and help improve relationship connections.

Affectionate Communication

Communication has its advantages. A comparison between affectionate communication and its negative counterparts will clearly highlight their differences and enhance understanding of the latter. Affectionate communication involves expressing emotions to convey feelings to another person, fostering unity and kinship within the relationship (Hesse & Tian, 2020, as cited in Floyd & Morman, 1998). Williams (2012) characterized affectionate communication as the use of empathy to convey feelings,

thereby fostering closeness in a relationship. It involves expressing concern, sympathy, and care for another person. Additionally, affectionate communication is expressed both verbally and nonverbally (Floyd et al., 2023; Williams, 2012). Its reputation gives way to happier relationships and improved physical and mental health.

Evidently, emotions and affectionate communication are distinct. It is possible to demonstrate affectionate communication without necessarily experiencing the underlying emotions (Floyd et al., 2023; Hesse & Tian, 2020). In other words, demonstrating empathy and care for someone does not necessitate experiencing positive emotions toward that individual. This phenomenon is referred to as *deceptive affection* (Floyd et al., 2023), which can either benefit or harm the relationship (Hesse & Tian, 2020). Conversely, genuine affectionate communication is paramount to relationship happiness and preservation (Floyd et al., 2023). Affectionate communication is significantly correlated with relationship satisfaction (Floyd et al., 2023; Hesse & Tian, 2020; Williams, 2012). It fosters closer bonds and positivity within the relationship (Tong et al., 2018). However, building a healthy relationship requires more than just affectionate communication.

In her quantitative study, Williams (2012) emphasized the importance of reciprocal empathy for a thriving relationship. She referred to this concept as *relational equitability*. This entails a cost-reward system where one spouse may experience the benefits of affectionate communication while the other spouse may feel deprived of it. Evidently, individuals who feel deprived of affectionate communication typically do not reciprocate it. They often experience greater anguish and negative emotions within the

relationship (Williams, 2012). Although individuals can exhibit affection without an emotional repertoire, most require empathy and passion to effectively engage in affectionate communication (Hesse & Tian, 2020). It appears that inadequate affectionate communication often results in couples or family therapy and may even lead to divorce (Floyd et al., 2023).

A significant advantage of affectionate communication is its positive impact on mental and physical health. Individuals who engage in affectionate communication are more likely to experience improved mental health, including reduced depression and stress (Floyd et al., 2023; Hesse & Tian, 2020). Floyd et al. (2023) noted that individuals who both express and receive affection are more likely to experience improved physical health.

Furthermore, affectionate communication is employed to enhance relationships. It is expressed both verbally and nonverbally to convey empathy, warmth, and compassion. Without affection, individuals are more likely to seek therapy and may even pursue divorce (Floyd et al., 2023). Conversely, individuals who adeptly express affection tend to experience greater relationship satisfaction and overall happiness (Floyd et al., 2023). Inadvertently, affectionate communication is often employed to gain favor in relationships. Affectionate communication plays a role in capitalizing on positive experiences, accommodating others' needs, and making relational bids. These communication strategies are essential for fostering strong relational connections.

Capitalization, Accommodation, and Bids

The application of capitalizing, accommodating, and placing relational bids is universal in relationships, as it fosters intimacy and cultivates healthy connections. Although these tactics may share similarities, it is their differences that make them unique. Evidently, capitalization, accommodation, and relational bids exemplify social exchange theory, as they are integral to the cost-reward system. Each of these strategies seeks to establish connection by sharing and receiving information within the relationship, evaluating the costs and rewards of their actions.

Capitalization involves positively sharing achievements and receiving supportive feedback (De Netto et al., 2021; Pagani et al., 2020). This form of communication originates from an active-constructive approach (De Netto et al., 2021; Pagani et al., 2020), where the sender enthusiastically shares their good news, and the receiver responds positively, thereby enhancing the positive interaction (Peters et al., 2018). Fundamentally, capitalization enhances relational connection, well-being, and overall relationship satisfaction (De Netto et al., 2021; Pagani et al., 2020; Peters et al., 2018).

Accommodation is a passive-constructive communication style where an individual may feel attacked but chooses not to react defensively; instead, they respond constructively (Overall et al., 2010). De Netto et al. (2021) referred to this as *constructive responses*, where the individual seeks to appease the situation through their reaction. Although Overall et al. (2010) and De Netto et al. (2021) concurred that this type of response enhances relationship satisfaction and well-being over time, Yıldız-Önal and Uçar (2023) emphasized that the passive approach could potentially hinder the

relationship. Consequently, maladjusted behavior may lead the receiver/accommodator to respond with negative repercussions or choose not to accommodate at all. This typically results in unsatisfying relationships.

Bids serve as a means for partners to communicate and foster emotional intimacy (Gottman & Driver, 2005). These bids can be expressed both verbally and nonverbally, with the primary intention of establishing a connection. The success of this connection hinges on the receiver's response to the bid. Employing a longitudinal observational study, Gottman and Driver (2005) identified three types of reactions: turning toward, turning away, and turning against. The most effective response occurs when the receiver turns toward the bid, incorporating both accommodation and capitalization. The receiver listens and responds positively to the bid. Conversely, the least productive reaction is turning against the bid, where the receiver reacts negatively. Turning away from the bid is also negative, though less aggressive than turning against it. Gottman and Gottman (2017) found that individuals who turned toward the bid more frequently experienced greater relationship satisfaction.

Observably, various communication strategies can enhance relationship satisfaction when used effectively but can be detrimental when misapplied. Capitalization enhances connection (Peters et al., 2018), accommodation facilitates letting go (Overall et al., 2010), and bids aim to foster emotional connection and intimacy (Gottman & Driver, 2005). When used adaptively, these strategies enhance relationships and increase satisfaction. Conversely, when communication is used maladaptively, relationships deteriorate, leading to dissatisfaction, conflict, and potential dissolution.

Conflict Communication and Marital Dissolution

“Birchler (1979) defined communication skills of married couples as the observable, changeable, verbal, and nonverbal behaviors regarding the way messages are delivered and received between the couple” (Tam et al., 2011, p. 80). When individuals encounter conflict in their communication, it often stems from a lack of adaptive communication styles. They feel misunderstood as they attempt to meet their needs in an ineffective communicative environment (Gottman & Driver, 2005). An individual’s lack of adaptive communication skills often arises from emotional immaturity and personal perceptions (Mozas-Alonso et al., 2022). Unresolved disagreements can negatively impact mental health and may ultimately lead to divorce (Firat & Okanlı, 2019; Kanter et al., 2022; Sinha et al., 2021; Weber et al., 2021).

The quality of a couple’s communication is crucial in determining relationship dissatisfaction and the potential for marital dissolution (Firat & Okanlı, 2019; Othman et al., 2021; Sinha et al., 2021). Effective communication necessitates positive or adaptive strategies, including problem-solving skills, empathy (Gordon & Chen, 2016), vulnerability, and favorableness (Sinha et al., 2021). However, due to a lack of emotional maturity (Mozas-Alonso et al., 2022), many couples resort to maladaptive communication styles, such as defensiveness, blaming, or criticizing (Gottman & Driver, 2005). Evidently, defensiveness and stubbornness adversely affect communication (Firat & Okanlı, 2019). In their longitudinal observational study, Gottman and Gottman identified “the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” as key indicators of relationship distress: criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling (2017, p. 13; see also

Gottman et al., 1998; Gottman & Levenson, 1999; Gottman & Levenson, 2002). These communication styles frequently lead to conflict within relationships, with contempt being the most detrimental (Sinha et al., 2021). According to Sinha et al. (2021) statistical analysis, contempt is a behavioral communication style characterized by overt disrespect towards the relationship. Regrettably, these communication styles foster conflict, which in turn promotes cognitive distortions. As conflict emerges, emotional arousal heightens, leading to increased physiological arousal and subsequently triggering cognitive distortions (Whiting & Cravens, 2016). According to Whiting and Cravens (2016), distorted thinking can lead individuals to employ manipulation tactics for their own benefit. This behavior exacerbates conflict and hinders effective listening from their partner. Whiting and Cravens (2016) posited that distorting thoughts about perceived conflict serves as a defense mechanism for self-preservation. Thus, negative communication results in impaired cognitive functioning. This highlights the importance of positive and effective communication, underscoring its crucial role in improving relationship quality and satisfaction.

Furthermore, individuals who encounter conflict or negative communication in their relationships are more likely to experience poor mental health and diminished well-being (Gordon & Chen, 2016; Kansky, 2018; Tam et al., 2011). Ineffective communication frequently plays a substantial role in marital breakdown and divorce (Firat & Okanlı, 2019; Kanter et al., 2022; Sinha et al., 2021; Weber et al., 2021; Williams, 2012). Individuals who lack experience in problem-solving and conflict resolution within their relationships are more likely to separate (Firat & Okanlı, 2019).

Gottman and Gottman (2017) categorized couples as either *masters* or *disasters* based on their communication effectiveness. Masters are more likely to respond positively to bids for connection and find humor in their relationship. Conversely, the disasters exhibited more aggressive or withdrawn behaviors in their relationships. Gottman and Gottman (2017) observed that when taught conflict management, the masters were more adept due to their ability to remain calm, whereas the disasters experienced what they defined as *psychological flooding*. According to Gottman and Gottman (2017), during this state, individuals become emotionally aroused, which impairs their ability to think logically about relationships or the problem at hand. As a result, they find it challenging to apply their conflict management skills. Additionally, “disasters” may emotionally withdraw from the relationship, often avoiding situations due to feelings of anxiety and shame arising from their ineffective communication skills. It appears that individuals who withdraw from conflict tend to remain married longer than those who engage in confrontational conflict (Gottman & Gottman, 2017). However, both withdrawn and confrontational individuals may find themselves in a “gridlocked conflict” (Gottman & Gottman, 2017, p. 18). This occurs because both parties have a strong desire to adhere to their belief systems. Only couples who are satisfied and communicate effectively can break free from their gridlocked state and progress in their relationship (Gottman & Gottman, 2017).

The central theme of this section is the importance of feeling understood. Despite potential conflicts in communication, partners who feel understood are more likely to effectively problem-solve, reduce conflict, and experience greater life satisfaction

(Gordon & Chen, 2016; Williams, 2012). As individuals strive to understand their partner within the relationship, they cultivate cognitive empathy, which enhances intimacy (Gordon & Chen, 2016). Cognitive empathy involves the ability to recognize and understand a partner's emotions. By actively seeking to comprehend their partner's needs, individuals can take appropriate steps to address and resolve conflicts.

Consequently, individuals who demonstrate cognitive empathy tend to experience greater satisfaction in their relationships, while those lacking cognitive empathy are generally less satisfied (Gordon & Chen, 2016). There are other benefits to understanding a partner in a relationship. By employing cognitive empathy, partners can mitigate conflict through constructive and assertive communication (Gordon & Chen, 2016). Partners also create a safe environment through validation and collaboration. Gottman and Gottman found that consistent emotional bonding between partners tends to reduce conflict over time (2017). They posited that emotionally connected couples are more likely to build trust and reduce relational problems. Firat and Okanlı (2019) also emphasized that effective communication is crucial for building trust, as it helps couples feel secure in their relationship.

Conflict is not inherently negative as it prompts partners to discuss and resolve relational issues. Weber et al. (2021) asserted that effective communication during conflict is essential for couples, as it strengthens their relationship and enhances their problem-solving skills. Marital satisfaction necessitates effective communication skills and conflict resolution strategies, which contribute to better mental and physical health (Tam et al., 2011). Consequently, conflict resolution strategies are effective only when

individuals exhibit positive behaviors, such as assertiveness, friendliness, and nonjudgmental attitudes (Gordon & Chen, 2016). Cultivating strong communication skills can help couples achieve relationship satisfaction and prevent marital dissolution. Although this may appear straightforward, cultural and gender-related factors introduce various complexities

Communication in Culture and Gender Variability

When examining cultural communication styles, there is a notable contrast between Western and Eastern cultures. Eastern cultures, such as China, tend to communicate indirectly, whereas Western cultures, such as the United States, favor a more direct approach (Hiew et al., 2016; Williamson et al., 2012). Individuals from Eastern cultures communicate in a manner that requires the receiver to pay close attention to body language and tone to fully grasp the message (Hiew et al., 2016). Employing in-depth interviews and focus groups, Williamson et al., found that Easterners place a high value on social harmony (2012). This may explain why their communication style is less direct compared to Western cultures. According to Hiew et al. (2016), high-context communication is characterized by its implicit and indirect nature. Using a mixed-methods approach, they noted that in Eastern cultures, high-context communication places less emphasis on verbal messages and more on the quality of relationships. Conversely, Westerners employ direct and low-context communication, ensuring that their messages are clear and easily understood by the receiver (Hiew et al., 2016). Although the receiver still considers nonverbal cues, they primarily rely on the verbal content to comprehend the sender's message. Williamson et al. described Westerners as

valuing “uniqueness and personal expression” (2012, p. 314). Furthermore, positivity (Williamson et al., 2012) and validation (Hiew et al., 2016) in communication hold greater significance for Americans compared to Chinese. Clearly, individuals across all cultures demonstrate greater proficiency in recognizing emotions within their own cultural context compared to other cultures (van Kleef & Côté, 2022). This suggests that despite the differences in communication styles between Western and Eastern cultures, everyone can effectively interpret nonverbal communication within their own culture.

The importance of communication in gender variability is as significant as it is in cultural contexts. Gender differences in communication are particularly evident in emotional expression (Heidari et al., 2019; Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa, 2023). It is well-established that, in general, women tend to be more expressive and emotional than men (Hiew et al., 2016; Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa, 2023). Women’s emotional expressions vary significantly compared to men due to their heightened emotional state. In contrast, men tend to feel more satisfied in relationships when they can quickly de-escalate emotionally (Weber et al., 2021). Weber et al. (2021) also found that men experience greater satisfaction when women quickly de-escalate emotionally; however, this is not the case for women. Women generally experience greater relationship satisfaction when they remain emotionally engaged for a longer period. Unlike men, women often require more time for emotional de-escalation, rather than quickly letting go of their emotions. Weber et al. (2021) suggested that women likely have an advantage in emotional de-escalation within relationships. Their emotional responses significantly influence the direction in which the relationship progresses. In addition to differences in

communication styles between men and women, women tend to communicate more affectionately than men (Hesse & Tian, 2020). When wives use negative communication styles, such as passive-destructive communication, men are more likely to perceive their relationships negatively compared to women (Pagani et al., 2020). Compared to women, men find it more challenging to discuss topics such as money (Weber et al., 2023) and economic stressors (Sinha et al., 2021). Additionally, men are more likely to avoid or reject bids for connection made by their wives (Gottman & Driver, 2005). In their research, Gottman and Driver (2005) suggested that men may experience discomfort with physiological arousal, possibly due to suboptimal emotional regulation skills. They also proposed that men might regulate their intimacy with their wives as an indirect method of managing their emotions, potentially impacting marital harmony.

It is crucial to recognize that communication varies significantly across cultures and genders. While conducting participant interviews, it is essential to consider these factors when exploring the impact of hubristic pride affecting communication. This approach aimed to mitigate potential biases. Furthermore, communication can be both beneficial and detrimental to relationships. The effectiveness or maladaptiveness of how an individual communicates will ultimately determine the relationship's outcome (Firat & Okanlı, 2019; Othman et al., 2021). Each aspect of communication is crucial for understanding how it functions within relationships. Whether emotional, affectionate, accommodating, or conflictual, each dimension offers valuable insights into relationship dynamics. Analyzing hubristic pride through the lens of social exchange theory and exploring its impact on communication can yield valuable insights into the field of social

interactions. This rationale underpins my decision to concentrate my research on divorced individuals. Their reflections on communication within their previous marriages provide a distinctive perspective. Consequently, this paper explores divorce and relationship satisfaction.

Divorce and Relationship Satisfaction in Communication

Scholars worldwide investigate the causes of divorce, suggesting a global interest in this topic. Over the past decade, the divorce rate in the United States has averaged around 50% (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; Williamson et al., 2016). It is noteworthy to know that divorce was relatively low in the 1950s, but when the divorce law changed in the 1970s, it doubled (Rotz, 2016). The law changed from limited accessibility to no-fault divorce, spurring a divorce revolution (Jiménez-Rubio et al., 2016; Korhonen & Puhakka, 2021). The no-fault divorce allowed individuals to unilaterally divorce their spouse without spousal consent. Over the past three decades, similar divorce laws have changed in various countries worldwide, including Mexico, which has led to increased divorce rates (Aguirre, 2019). On a good note, there has been a modest, yet consistent decline in divorce during the past decade (Cohen, 2019; Rotz, 2016).

Researchers seeking a comprehensive understanding of divorce generally delve into the realms of marital satisfaction and stability. Several factors have been linked to divorce such as marital economic strain (Bland & McQueen, 2021; Falconier & Jackson, 2020; Sinha et al., 2021; Totenhagen et al., 2018), parental challenges (Daundasekara et al., 2021; Khajehei, 2016; Noy et al., 2020), infidelity (Carter, 2018; Perry, 2018), poor

mental health (Brown et al., 2024; Kansky, 2018), addiction and abuse (Noghani et al., 2021), sexual issues (Gravningen et al., 2017; Hill et al., 2017), and communication (Hemesath, 2016; Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa, 2023; Ouseph & Bance, 2022; Thadathil & Sriram, 2020; Williamson et al., 2016). Each factor plays a role in marital satisfaction and stability. Inevitably, each contributing factor engenders strain and frustration within the relationship when couples anticipate adaptive functioning, only for it to manifest as maladaptive functioning. According to Gottman et al. (1998), marital happiness and stability require reciprocity and positive affect. This indicates that when one individual expresses happiness, their partner will also exhibit happiness. Gottman and Driver (2005) referred to this as turning toward the emotional bid as mentioned earlier in this paper. When couples experience what Gottman et al. (1998) called *the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*—criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling—they generally turn away from emotional bids, thus creating a negative effect. Extensive evidence supports the notion that individuals experiencing a heightened positive affect within their relationships tend to exhibit better physical and mental health, greater wealth, and foster a stronger sense of self in their children (Gottman & Gottman, 2017).

Assuredly, effective positive affect necessitates adaptive communication. Communication plays a role in marital satisfaction, but it is not necessarily what individuals might think. Many believe that relationship satisfaction hinges on communication with the relationship. Although this is partially true, communication is more than just a component of relationship satisfaction; positive and negative

communication greatly depend on relationship satisfaction (Christensen & Shenk, 1991; Kanter et al., 2022; Lavner et al., 2016; Markman et al., 2010; Sinha et al., 2021).

Studies have demonstrated the impact of positive and negative communication within relationships. Johnson et al. (2022) employed a longitudinal study and determined that satisfied couples experienced a decrease in negative communication over time. The correlation between positive communication and relationship satisfaction was found to be relatively low. This implies that negative communication is influenced by the level of relationship satisfaction, whereas positive communication does not necessarily dictate relationship satisfaction. In unsatisfactory relationships, partners are more prone to engage in negative communication, and the reverse is also true (Johnson et al., 2022). However, this does not negate the fact that negative communication can lead to relationship satisfaction (e.g., Fırat & Okanlı, 2019; Hiew et al., 2016; Johnson et al., 2022; Lavner et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2019; Sinha et al., 2021; Suchov, 2022; Yıldız-Önal & Uçar, 2023). Sinha et al. (2021) conveyed Markman et al. (2010) findings that individuals with poor communication styles are more likely to experience unsatisfactory relationships. Similarly, Lavner et al. (2016) concurred that relationship satisfaction is significantly correlated with and predictive of communication quality. Additionally, Suchov (2022) identified a significant relationship between increased marital satisfaction and positive communication, with a corresponding decline in negative communication. Scott et al. (2019) reported that negative communication was significantly correlated with less effective outcomes. Johnson et al. (2022) and Owen et al. (2019) articulated their perspectives on the role of negative communication within relationships. Johnson et al.

and Owen et al. concurred that individuals may reduce negative communication within a relationship to appease their partner, the situation, or both. This reduction in negative communication can foster more amiable interactions and a lighter atmosphere. However, it does not fully resolve underlying issues, thereby contributing to an unhealthy relationship.

Healthy relationships necessitate positive communication (Kanter et al., 2022), which in turn fosters strong levels of intimacy (Ghanbarian et al., 2020). Individuals who engage in effective communication within their relationships are more likely to experience better physical health, mental health, happiness, and overall well-being (Kansky, 2018; Tavakolizadeh et al., 2015). Furthermore, individuals in satisfied relationships tend to live longer and enjoy better financial stability (Gottman & Gottman, 2017; Stanley et al., 2020). Gottman and Gottman (2017) found that couples who laughed together experienced lower physiological arousal in response to their partner, exhibited greater kindness towards each other, and had longer-lasting relationships compared to those who did not engage in such behaviors. Evidently, relationship education programs (REPs) that instruct couples on adaptive and effective communication have proven beneficial in enhancing relationship satisfaction (Fox, 2024; Owen et al., 2019; Stanley et al., 2020). However, in Fox's (2024) mixed-methods approach, she noted that the implementation of REPs to demonstrate changes in relationships has not been extensively researched. Alternatively, Stanley et al. (2020) asserted that partners exhibiting maladaptive behaviors can benefit from participating in REPs, gaining the advantage of developing healthy relationships. Sinha et al. (2021) reported that individuals committed

to their relationship who participate in REPs are more likely to exhibit reduced dedication later in the relationship. Additionally, Karantzas et al. (2023) found that REPs reduce aggression in relationships, thereby enhancing relationship satisfaction. Moreover, the effectiveness of REPs appears to depend on their implementation, utilization, and the specific demographics of the relationships involved. REPs are beneficial by educating couples on adaptive communication styles, thereby enhancing relationship satisfaction.

In general, divorce is a heavy subject, and its prevalence in contemporary society warrants serious consideration. People divorce for various reasons, one of which is communication (e.g., Hemesath, 2016; Mwansisya & Mwampagatwa, 2023; Ouseph & Bance, 2022; Thadathil & Sriram, 2020; Williamson et al., 2016). Evidently, the lack of research on hubristic pride and how it affects communication among previously married individuals is concerning. The critical role of communication in couples' marital satisfaction warrants heightened attention and merits rigorous research. I planned to fill this gap in the research by studying how hubristic pride affects communication among divorced individuals. Consequently, this will enhance the examination of communication within relationships.

Summary and Conclusions

The above literature review chapter has presented a gap within the literature, indicating a need for research on the topic of hubristic pride affecting communication in previous marital relationships. Numerous studies highlight the role of hubristic pride in relationships and communication; however, its direct impact on communication remains unexplored. This paper demonstrated how effective communication significantly

enhances marital satisfaction (Tam et al., 2011), while poor communication raises the chances of divorce (Firat & Okanlı, 2019; Gottman & Gottman, 2017; Othman et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2018; Sinha et al., 2021). The chapter also examined personality traits, revealing that hubristic pride in behaviors and communication, is linked to diminished relationship functioning (Carver et al., 2010; Lanciano & Curci, 2021; Thamboo, 2022; Tracy et al., 2009; Yu et al., 2020). It has been noted that communication is influenced by various factors, including emotions (Lee et al., 2023), schemas (Yıldız-Önal & Uçar, 2023), and attachment styles (Karantzas et al., 2023). This study aimed to address this gap by directly elucidating the impact of hubristic pride on communication. To guide this study, I applied Homans's social exchange theory to explore how hubristic pride impacts the social interactions of divorced individuals within their former marital relationships. Social exchange theory offered this study a distinctive viewpoint on the impact of hubristic pride on communication, aiding in a deeper comprehension of how to enhance and strengthen relationship connections.

In this chapter, I discussed the seven facets of hubristic pride, each sharing similar qualities yet possessing distinct characteristics. Hubristic pride has been shown to cause marital discord (Carver et al., 2010; Krettenauer & Casey, 2015; Mercadante & Tracy, 2022; Tracy et al., 2009; Tracy & Robins, 2007b). It motivates individuals to ascend the social hierarchy (Tracy & Robins, 2007b) and is used as a defense mechanism (Demirbilek et al., 2022) to protect those from feeling vulnerable. Furthermore, I investigated the dark triad to understand those individuals who exhibit hubristic pride

most prominently. I anticipated that the exploration of the dark triad will illuminate the comprehensive understanding of hubristic pride and its impact on communication.

Although communication appears simple, its intrinsic nature reveals elaborate complexities when examining its multifaceted dimensions. I explained how individuals develop schemas by acquiring new knowledge and integrating it with pre-existing knowledge (Smith, 2021), and how maladaptive schemas negatively impact interpersonal communication (Yıldız-Önal & Uçar, 2023). Additionally, several factors, such as attachment styles (Karantzas et al., 2023) and emotions (Lee et al., 2023), significantly influence communication within relationships (Ghanbarian et al., 2020; Kansky, 2018). I shared about affectionate communication, and how it can be expressed both verbally and nonverbally, foster unity and kinship within relationships, and lead to improved physical and mental health (Hesse & Tian, 2020). Additionally, capitalizing, accommodating, and placing relational bids are universal strategies in relationships that foster intimacy and healthy connections, each uniquely contributing to social exchange theory's cost and reward system (De Netto et al., 2021; Pagani et al., 2020). Moreover, Birchler (1979) defined communication skills in married couples as observable and changeable verbal and nonverbal behaviors used to deliver and receive messages (Tam et al., 2011). Known as a maladaptive communication skill, conflict can often arise from a lack of adaptive communication styles, leading to misunderstandings and unresolved disagreements, which can negatively impact mental health and potentially lead to divorce (Fırat & Okanlı, 2019; Gottman & Driver, 2005). I also considered the role of culture and gender variability in communication, explaining direct and indirect communication (Hiew et al.,

2016; Williamson et al., 2012). All these factors are especially important to review because they add a distinct understanding to the communication process.

Furthermore, given the impact of hubristic pride on marriages (Tracy et al., 2009), I opted to research this topic from the perspective of divorcees. They likely offered a distinctive perspective on the impact of hubristic pride affecting communication in their previous marriage. Researchers globally explore the causes of divorce (Bland & McQueen, 2021; Brown et al., 2024; Daundasekara et al., 2021; Noghani et al., 2021; Perry, 2018). There have been significant increases following the introduction of no-fault divorce laws in the 1970s (Jiménez-Rubio et al., 2016; Korhonen & Puhakka, 2021), though recent years have seen a modest decline in divorce (Cohen, 2019; Rotz, 2016). Additionally, effective communication, both positive and negative, significantly influences marital satisfaction (Tam et al., 2011), and relationship education programs (REPs) can enhance satisfaction by teaching adaptive communication skills (Fox, 2024; Owen et al., 2019; Stanley et al., 2020). Researching the impact of hubristic pride on communication in previously married individuals has provided valuable insights for enhancing communication strategies and fostering stronger relationships.

In Chapter 3, I outline the methodology employed by using a basic qualitative research design. The methodology demonstrates alignment with practical gaps by providing a justification for the chosen method, detailing the procedures, connecting the research to the theoretical framework, ensuring validity and reliability, and addressing any limitations. Chapter 3 also covers the procedures for participant recruitment and outline interviews as the primary method of data collection. The data analysis plan

adheres to Saldaña's (2021) descriptive coding process. In the final stages of Chapter 3, I outline additional essential steps, including trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In this qualitative study, I investigated how hubristic pride affects communication. I employed Homans's (1958) social exchange theory as a theoretical framework to enhance understanding of how hubristic pride affects communication. Partners aim to establish equilibrium or parity among their social exchanges by considering rewards and costs, or how they communicate with each other (Ahmad et al., 2023; Cropanzano et al., 2017). The objective of the current study was to explore how hubristic pride affects communication, specifically its effects on the rewards and costs system. I anticipated that counseling professionals may use this research to assist couples in identifying instances of hubristic pride in their communication, thereby facilitating positive transformation in their relationship. This study aimed to foster positive social change by assisting in maintaining marital relationships. To achieve this, I developed a robust methodology that would enable me to meet my research objectives. In this chapter, I outline the methodology that was used, covering aspects such as research design alignment with practical gaps, the role of a researcher, participant recruitment procedures, instrumentation, procedures in recruitment and data collection, the data analysis plan, trustworthiness, and other essential steps for my study such as ethical procedures. This methodological framework was intended to effectively facilitate the achievement of my research objectives.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question that guided this study was the following: What are the experiences of divorcees' hubristic pride affecting communication in their previous

marital relationships? I used a basic qualitative design for this study. Qualitative research incorporates learning about a phenomenon to provide knowledge to the research field (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that qualitative research aims to deepen understanding of a topic, with the potential to enhance practical applications. Merriam and Tisdell added that qualitative research is an inductive approach to understand the experiences of people through interviews, documents, and observations. A basic qualitative research design is the most common qualitative design (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This design leverages the interpretation of experiences, constructs, and meaning-making of those experiences (Al-Ababneh, 2020; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In relation to basic qualitative designs, Merriam and Tisdell stated “the overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (p. 24).

Additionally, data collection in qualitative research primarily involves interviews and observations. I wanted to understand the meaning of cognitive processes and behavioral motivations of individuals regarding hubristic pride and how it affects communication.

Given the current study’s focus on understanding past experiences, I conducted direct interviews with my participants. I interviewed eight divorced individuals recruited through purposeful sampling and, subsequently, snowball sampling. Interviews were conducted in person and via Zoom (see Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Additionally, my interviews were semistructured and contained open-ended questions. The interviews introduced challenges because it may have been possible that misguidance arose from participants’ perceptions, the departure from their natural context, and researcher bias (see Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Creswell and Creswell (2022) explained that

interviews, despite the absence of direct observation, serve as a valuable tool for gathering past information, allowing researchers to exercise control over the specific questions posed. Overall, qualitative research's ontology stems from the nature of being or "the nature of reality" (Al-Ababneh, 2020, p. 82). According to Al-Ababneh (2020), this methodology is interpretive and socially constructed. The ontology and social construct of the current study included divorcees' experiences of hubristic pride affecting their communication.

I approached this study from a social constructivist standpoint, considering that most qualitative research is grounded in constructivist frameworks (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Social constructivism is a theory constructed by Vygotsky in the mid-1900s (Schreiber & Valle, 2013). Schreiber and Valle (2013) elucidated that social constructivism views people as learners in life because they work toward creating their own stories. Patton (2015) explained social constructivism as how people make sense of the world around them. Social constructivism posits that individuals engage in social interactions to construct their unique perspectives on life. Using a social constructivist approach, I wanted to involve myself in the participants' meaning-making process by approaching them with empathy, curiosity, and nonjudgment (see Kim, 2014).

Having evaluated a qualitative case study approach for addressing the research question, I determined that a basic qualitative method would yield the most favorable results for this study. Qualitative methods assure richer data and meanings when compared to quantitative research (Patton, 2015). Quantitative studies incorporate measuring and manipulating variables within the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). I

am interested in the life experiences of people, rather than numerical outcomes. Hence, a quantitative study would not be able to answer my research question.

When researching this topic, I wanted to comprehend how hubristic pride affects communication within divorcees' previous marital relationships. During the interview process, I expected divorcees to share personal experiences of hubristic pride occurring within their communication. I hoped my study findings would offer supplementary insights for researchers and scholars investigating the impact of hubristic pride on communication.

Role of the Researcher

When researching this topic, I wanted to better understand how hubristic pride affected communication within divorcees' previous marital relationships. I conducted interviews with divorced individuals, aiming to gain insights into how they perceived the impact of hubristic pride on their communication. During the interviews, I chose to not share or contribute any thoughts to my participant responses as well as any vocal cues (Carmichael & Mizrahi, 2023), which have the tendency to misconstrue participant responses. Different researchers have studied the concept of vocal cues during interactions (Burgoon et al., 2008; DeGroot & Gooty, 2009; DeGroot & Motowidlo, 1999). These researchers found similarities in how vocal cues can influence communication dynamics. For my purposes, I chose to refrain from vocal cue interjections to keep the interview neutral and unbiased. As a mental health counselor, I was sure it would be difficult not to ask additional questions that might not result in responses related to my topic; however, I kept in mind whether any follow-up questions

might be necessary. My role as a researcher required me to stay unbiased, empathetic, and curious (Kim, 2014). I had to continually remind myself to remain self-aware and mindful of my role as a researcher. As I facilitated this process, I documented the responses of the participants and made notes of important physical cues. The most important aspect of interviewing my participants was building rapport with them. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) contended that interviewees tend to open up about their experiences when interacting with someone who displays genuine interest and empathy. They also emphasized that establishing rapport requires the interviewer to possess interviewing skills and relevant knowledge related to the interview topic. I have been a counseling professional for 10 years and believe that my skills in building rapport and knowing when and how to ask questions are adequate, if not advanced. After conducting extensive research on this topic for over a year, I believe I possess the requisite knowledge and understanding to be considered trustworthy by my participants. The experience I have acquired over the years has helped me pursue this research topic. I enjoy learning about the social aspects of relationships and people's cognitive processes and behavioral motivations. This research topic investigates the largest social aspect of all relationships—communication.

As mentioned earlier, in the qualitative realm, biases and assumptions are discouraged. As the “primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16), I worked on being aware of my perceptions and biases. Additionally, Merriam and Tisdell believed that the elimination of biases is practically impossible; rather, they should be identified and observed throughout the research

process. One of my assumptions, for example, is that hubristic pride causes problems in communication. However, this may not necessarily be the case. My potentially biased influences may add a slight change to the results of this study. I tried to minimize my biases and assumptions, by writing down any thoughts suggesting potential biases or assumptions about the person, their communication with their partner, their prideful tactics, their partner's prideful tactics, and how they viewed their partner's communication with them. I anticipated that these approaches would mitigate any remaining biases and assumptions.

Validity is paramount in qualitative research when trying to create credibility. Therefore, part of my role as a researcher was to use multiple validity methods to establish internal validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used member checking to help verify the research as being accurate. Key findings of the interviews were shared with the participants to check for accuracy, and participants were allowed to comment on the findings. I clarify biases in Chapter 4, explaining how I engaged in candid self-reflection to illuminate the potential influences that shaped this research. Accordingly, I provided an interpretation of the findings, acknowledging my inherent biases. I also used peer debriefing to gain an alternative perspective on the research. Overall, in the interviewing process, researchers are charged with flexibility, empathy, ambiguity/curiosity, observation, and self-awareness (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During the interviewing process, I actively integrated these aspects by attentively listening to individuals as they shared their experiences related to hubristic pride and its impact on their communication with their previous spouses.

Methodology

Participant Selection

I recruited seven divorced adult women and one man for this study who were not actively involved in ongoing child custody proceedings. The final number depended on when data saturation was achieved. I employed purposeful sampling to guarantee that participants have been divorced for less than two years. I selected a period of less than two years because individuals can more easily recall emotional experiences compared to ordinary memories (Kensinger & Ford, 2020). Additionally, purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research to identify and select participants who will provide information-rich data related to the phenomenon of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through purposeful sampling, I sought substantial and valuable insights from individuals' experiences. Furthermore, in the context of snowball sampling, I asked people if they knew someone who fit the criteria and who were interested in interviewing about hubristic pride affecting their relationship communication. Snowball sampling is the most common type of purposeful sampling due to its convenience in identifying study participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To ensure purposeful sampling, I reached out on the social media platforms Facebook and Nextdoor Neighbor, inquiring whether anyone was interested in participating in an interview, and I provided the proposed criteria for inclusion. The invitation (see Appendix A) provided comprehensive information about the study's purpose, its circumstances, the exclusion criteria, and my contact details. Those interested were encouraged to respond through Nextdoor Neighbor, Facebook, or email.

Participants volunteered to participate in this study. All interviews were either in person or via Zoom (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The informed consent form contained a confidentiality statement that outlined how all collected information would be treated as confidential and safeguarded. This form was sent to all participants before their interviews. This is crucial because individuals must be assured that their information remains secure and confidential (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). When explaining my findings in Chapter 4, I used pseudonyms for each participant.

I anticipated that 8-12 participants would volunteer for this study. According to Subedi (2021), qualitative studies typically involve a participant range of 1-20 or more, depending on data saturation. However, optimal saturation is often achieved with around 10 participants (Barkhuizen, 2014; Subedi, 2021). Appropriately, each participant was vetted and met the criteria given. Participants received a consent form via email detailing the recording procedures for interviews and the responsible and secure handling of their responses. Divorced individuals were requested to provide their consent by email with the phrase “I consent” to participate in the research study.

There is a saying that says, “Hindsight is 20/20.” This common saying emphasizes that hindsight allows people to perceive events more clearly when reflecting on the past. I selected divorced individuals because I believe they would offer a clearer perspective compared to those who are married. Thus, when looking back on their past marital relationships, divorcees will see how hubristic pride played a role in their communication. Kensinger and Ford (2020) described how people remember or recall emotional experiences far more than normal memories, and evidently, hubristic pride is

known as a self-conscious emotion (Tracy & Robins, 2004a; Tracy et al., 2008). Neusar and Rubínová (2023) agreed that emotional experiences are salient and found that memory recall is more accurate within three months of the event. Although memory recall may not be as accurate in later events, the recollection of events will be what Robinson and Clore (2002) call semantic knowledge, indicating a more generalized direction when recalling events. Therefore, the time allotment of being divorced for two years or less will increase the ability of participants to sufficiently recall past emotional experiences.

Instrumentation

In this study, interviews served as the primary research instrument. Conducting the interviews both in person and through Zoom, I gathered data-rich information through each participant. Their life experiences helped enhance my understanding of the research topic. Certainly, establishing rapport with participants was crucial during the interviewing process. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that rapport building is helpful, and I hoped it would lay the groundwork for obtaining the data-rich information I needed. To obtain this information, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix B). The interview protocol helped guide my interviews to better understand how hubristic pride affected communication among divorcees' previous marital relationships. After securing consent from participants and initiating small talk to build rapport, I began the interview protocol by introducing the study's purpose and addressing any questions they had formulated. This allowed for a smooth transition into the interviewing process.

Drawing on Homans's (1958) social exchange theory, I formulated open-ended questions to elicit meaningful insights from participants' knowledge and viewpoints. Though the interview protocol provided a standard set of questions, I also opted for a semistructured approach, allowing flexibility in wording rather than adhering strictly to a structured format. This flexibility enabled me to establish psychological safety with my participants and build a strong rapport. Thus, I created an environment of trust, where participants felt safe expressing their thoughts and shared openly. During the interview process, I diligently recorded notes on participants' testimonies. Upon concluding the interview process, I delivered a closing statement to the participants. I assured them that they would receive a summary of my findings and encourage them to provide feedback if the essence of their perspectives has been accurately captured.

I conducted interviews with all participants either in person or via Zoom and ensured they were in a safe and secure environment such as an isolated work office or home. Participants were given the autonomy to choose the interview platform and environment. I had planned to conduct an average of two interviews per week, with each interview lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. However, the actual pace was closer to one interview per week, with each session lasting approximately 30 to 60 minutes. I obtained participants' permission to audio record each interview, facilitating subsequent transcription and analysis. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), novice researchers can gain valuable insights by transcribing a few of their interviews. In addition, transcribing interviews ensures accuracy and allows for the writing of memos during the transcription process. Subsequently, I used the dictate button in Microsoft Word to

transcribe my interviews. It was efficient enough to allow me to transcribe, write memos, and analyze the data. Moreover, during the interview process, I maintained a journal to document my own biases and any issues that arised. I wanted to be self-aware of potential biases to ensure an unbiased approach throughout the interview process.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Participants for this study were recruited via Nextdoor Neighbor, Facebook, as well as through snowball sampling techniques. All participants presented as adults divorced for two years or less. I recruited participants by communicating my research objectives and the specific requirements for participation. Interested individuals directly emailed me, allowing me to provide them with additional information.

After gathering the participants, I sent them the informed consent via email and scheduled interviews which were conducted in person and via Zoom. In the interview, I revisited the consent form to verify the participant's continued interest in the study. To safeguard participant confidentiality, I employed pseudonyms in the research. I provided study participants with the assurance that all recorded interviews would be securely stored. They will be locked in a fireproof document box at my home and saved on my computer, protected by a password, for five years.

To ensure validity, I used member checking to engage participants and provide them with the assurance that they would receive a summary of my findings. I wanted them to offer feedback on the accuracy of their perspectives. As part of establishing a safe environment, I informed my participants that they had the option to terminate the interview at any time. Additionally, I obtained permission to record the interview. I used

a recording device via the computer and my cellphone. Throughout the interview, I took notes based on participants' nonverbal cues and other relevant information.

Regarding qualitative methods, gathering data involves interviews, observations, documents, and focus groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Incorporating observations may have enhanced this study and contributed to its internal validity. Nevertheless, data saturation can yield sufficient material from interviews to explore the phenomenon and gain valuable insights into individuals' perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For data collection, I utilized recording devices to capture both in person and Zoom interviews. After using the dictation button on Microsoft Word to transcribe the interviews, I carefully used participants' pseudonyms and securely stored all interview recordings on a personal computer with password protection. Additionally, I printed and safeguarded the documents in a locked, fireproof storage box. Accordingly, I made a conscious effort to recognize any biases that arose, allowing me to maintain objectivity. After the transcribing process, I actively reviewed each interview recording to ensure accuracy.

Upon concluding each interview, I gave participants a \$25 gift card to Amazon as a token of appreciation for their involvement in the study. I communicated with each participant about the data transcription and analysis process, as well as the security measures surrounding the interviews. Moreover, participants were given the phone number of a Walden University representative for any additional questions I may not have been able to answer.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis includes collecting, organizing, and analyzing the data. This is well described in Saldaña's (2021) book where he discusses how to analyze and synthesize the information collected. Saldaña explained how collecting data can be organized into meaning-making through coding and categorizing the material (2021). As a qualitative researcher, I wanted to make meaning from people's experiences. Data analysis followed Saldaña's (2021) descriptive coding process with the use of first and second cycle coding. Labels were assigned to words or phrases within the data. The data were reviewed twice making sure all words and phrases were assigned to each label or code. Categorization was used to synthesize the codes to create meaning. Similar categories were placed into themes, which were the outcome of synthezation, and thus explained the meaning behind the data. This analysis enabled better understanding of the experiences of divorcees' hubristic pride affecting communication within their previous relationship.

Following the interview process of collecting relevant information, the subsequent step involved organizing the material. I gathered information from divorced individuals' experiences of hubristic pride affecting communication within their previous marital relationships. I transcribed this information using Microsoft Word's dictation button. In addition to these transcriptions, I set aside various memos and reflections from my journal to enhance the depth and context of the accounts. Subsequently, I thoroughly reviewed each interview to acquaint myself with understanding participants' experiences and perspectives.

Coding the data involves an inductive process that benefits from an open-minded approach (Saldaña, 2021). This underscores the critical importance of self-awareness regarding an individual's biases. As I started to organize the information, I filtered out unusable data, including inaccurately transcribed words or phrases, as well as irrelevant statements unrelated to the interview questions or responses. As previously mentioned, I methodically familiarized myself with each interview by reading them several times. This preparation is essential before embarking on the initial coding cycle. Initial coding can also be described as open coding (Saldaña, 2021). Saldaña describes initial coding or open coding as the process of extracting relevant words and phrases from interviews to facilitate deeper exploration (2021). He characterized these words and phrases as *tentative* and *provisional*, emphasizing that they serve as an initial framework that leads to the second coding phase (Saldaña, 2021).

To conduct the initial coding analysis, I utilized a three-column table within Microsoft Word as recommended by Saldaña. Saldaña explained the significance of actively listening during interviews, capturing words and phrases that were emphasized through variations in volume and pitch (2021). While listening to the interviews, I highlighted the words and phrases that caught my attention. I began analysis using in vivo coding, writing the participants' words verbatim, and I marked those that were especially significant due to volume and pitch. While reviewing the dialogue, I actively sought recurring concepts and other pertinent information. Saldaña spoke of *concept* as a concise expression or phrase that means more than just the object itself (2021). It is a comprehensive perspective that seeks deeper meaning in words and phrases. I exerted

significant effort to uncover these deeper meanings. The first column contained transcript information which gave me a quick reference to the dialogue. In the second column, I put documented codes, frequently used phrases, and memos from the transcripts to facilitate comprehension and derive meaning from the data. The third column served as a repository for my notes, aiding in the interpretation of data and its meaning. I then utilized color coding to distinguish between concepts and recurring phrases. By monitoring frequently used phrases from participants' perspectives, I was able to discern key concepts related to the impact of hubristic pride on communication.

I then reorganized, categorized, and reanalyzed my codes during the second coding cycle. Saldaña explained that second cycle coding establishes logical connections between the concepts (2021). This requires analyzing and synthesizing common words and phrases through categorization, conceptualization, and thematization (Saldaña, 2021). While analyzing, synthesizing, and using pattern coding for various codes (Saldaña, 2021), I was able to identify categories, concepts, and themes. As I continued to reanalyze the data, I streamlined and reduced irrelevant data. This process facilitated the identification of themes and concepts from derived codes. Having acquired new data, I incorporated it into a new Word document to promote the exploration of how divorcees make meaning of hubristic pride affecting their communication.

From each interview, I utilized pattern coding to identify specific words and phrases, which were placed into categories. Categories link related codes with similar connotations (Saldaña, 2021). When analyzing the data, I identified specific categories connected to divorcees' experiences of hubristic pride in their communication. Analyzing

the categories further, I found patterns of emerging themes. Patterns offer dependable evidence that illustrate recurring behaviors in people's daily lives (Saldaña, 2021). Themes are usually expressions or sentences that reveal the content or significance of data (Saldaña, 2021). I conducted a thorough data analysis to ensure that it aligns with each theme and then analyzed the data again for any missed themes. Themes serve the purpose of addressing the research question, and this is why their inclusion in the analysis is a fundamental criterion (Saldaña, 2021). I meticulously analyzed the themes to assess their relevance to the research question and explored potential relationships, connections, and inconsistencies. Inconsistencies in the data can lead to altering a code or a theme (Saldaña, 2021). I examined each theme for potential discrepancies, hoping to uncover insights that would lead me toward new avenues of meaning. Additionally, I diligently ensured that my interview questions align with my research question, aiming to minimize any potential inconsistencies. Subsequently, I identified themes related to the effects of hubristic pride on communication.

Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility, or internal validity, addresses the extent to which research findings accurately reflect reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell revealed various researchers' thoughts on validity. One researcher described it as a primary source of stress for those closely connected to it. Another depicted reality as requiring interpretation, being influenced by random variables, multifaceted, and conceptually grounded. Another researcher characterized reality as not fully representing its true

nature. Merriam and Tisdell concurred with Maxwell's (2013) perspective that "one can never really capture reality" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 243). Maxwell (2013) asserted that validity is relative and must be evaluated about the research's objectives and context, rather than as an inherent characteristic of methods or conclusions. In other words, validity is the participant's reality in how they make meaning of the world around them. Qualitative researchers directly access reality through observation and the eyes of their participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To access internal validity, I incorporated member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, reflexivity, and peer examination. Member checks enhance the researcher's credibility by allowing participants to review and provide input on emerging findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I shared my findings with the participants and sought their feedback to verify the accuracy of my interpretation of their reality. For reflexivity, I disclosed my biases and assumptions regarding the research. This is crucial because a researcher's values and expectations can impact the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lastly, I utilized peer examination with my committee to obtain unbiased feedback on my research.

Transferability

Transferability, also referred to as external validity, concerns the applicability of a study's findings to other contexts or conditions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Specifically, user generalizability involves allowing individuals to determine the extent to which the study's findings apply to their particular situation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Transferability is crucial for enabling a broad audience to relate to the study's findings.

To enhance the transferability of my study, I employed “rich, thick description” in my research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 256). It is used to denote a highly descriptive and detailed presentation of the setting, participants, and particularly the results of a study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Another strategy I used to enhance transferability was typical sampling. Typical sampling involves describing how representative a program, event, or individual is in comparison to others (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My participants are adult individuals, seven women and one man, who have been divorced for less than two years. Given that the average divorce rate is 50% (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; Williamson et al., 2016), this constitutes a typical sampling. By employing rich descriptions and user generalizability, I can confidently assert the transferability of my study. Additionally, I outlined how my findings could be further investigated in subsequent research studies.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the repeatability and consistency of the research findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In essence, the research must be coherent, yield consistent findings, and be replicable. However, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that reliability in qualitative research is challenging to measure, as the number of individuals experiencing the same phenomenon does not inherently enhance the reliability of the observations. Additionally, Wolcott (2005) questions the necessity of addressing reliability, as the similarity of responses is often equated with accuracy, which is an unsuitable criterion for evaluating the precision of a qualitative study. This is because individuals interpret

observations differently, and errors are frequently made. Consequently, the study can be deemed dependable if the study's findings align with the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To ensure consistency and dependability, I employed an audit trail. An audit trail in a qualitative study meticulously details the data collection process, the development of categories, and the decision-making process throughout the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Throughout my research, I included detailed records of data collection methods, the development of categories and themes, and the decisions made during the inquiry. I documented my reflections, questions, relevant memos, and decisions related to any problems that may arise. In essence, my reflection journal or audit trail provided a comprehensive account of the study's execution and the data analysis process.

Confirmability

Confirmability or the level of confidence ensures that the findings are primarily influenced by the participants rather than the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). To ensure confirmability, I utilized three strategies: peer examination, an audit trail, and reflexivity. Peer examinations assist the researcher in evaluating the probability of their findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A peer reviewer is at least knowledgeable in either the research topic or the methodology. My dissertation committee assisted in peer reviewing the methodology section of my paper. As explained previously, the audit trail thoroughly documents the data collection process, the development of categories, and the decision-making procedures throughout the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I recorded the interesting topics during data collection, explained my coding techniques, and explained the significance of the themes. Lastly, reflexivity is a mindset that

qualitative researchers embrace during data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I adopted this mindset by maintaining a reflexive journal, where I documented my biases, assumptions, and values related to my research topic. Through these efforts, I aimed to accurately and confidently capture my participants' thoughts and feelings.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical guidelines and committees exist to help protect participants during the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). It is crucial to conduct research with integrity, incorporating the ethical perspective of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell agreed that before (2016) commencing a study, it is essential to consider the protection of participants from harm, their right to privacy, the principle of informed consent, and the potential for deception. Additionally, they believed the researcher needs to be aware of their values and ethics as they prepare for their study. To uphold ethical standards, it is necessary to consider various factors. Ethical issues can arise in interviews, observations, documents, data analysis, and the dissemination of findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Upon receiving IRB approval from Walden University (approval number 04-23-25-1077172), I promptly began recruiting participants for the study. I adhered to the previously outlined recruitment process, ensuring that consent was obtained from all participants for the research. I informed all participants that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time. The population for my study consisted of healthy adult females and one male, which did not constitute a vulnerable population (Gordon, 2020). As indicated previously, I used pseudonyms to

protect the participants' identities. While I do not maintain close personal relationships with any participants, some were known to me prior to the study in a limited capacity. Each participant was interviewed in their own home or isolated work office space.

To ensure ethical guidelines and protect the rights of my participants, I began with an informed consent document. As the researcher, I disclosed not only the purpose of the study but also the extent of privacy and protection each participant would receive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Prior to commencing the interview, I reviewed the informed consent document with each participant. I explained the use of pseudonyms to protect their identities, their right to withdraw at any time, and their option to decline to answer my questions. I informed each participant that I would be the sole individual who has access to their data, which was recorded as audio and transcribed onto a computer. I explained to them how their information would remain confidential as all data will be locked in a fireproof document box at my home and saved on my computer, which is password protected. All information will be securely stored for five years, after which it will be destroyed through shredding and deletion from my computer. These are the measures I have implemented to ensure adherence to ethical guidelines.

Summary

Using a basic qualitative research design, this approach significantly enhanced my ability to understand how hubristic pride affects communication in divorced individuals. This study involved semistructured interviews with participants, focusing on their past experiences and the meaning they ascribe to those experiences. I shared my role as a researcher, which required me to stay unbiased, empathetic, and curious, while

documenting responses and building rapport with participants. Detailing the participant selection process, I aimed to recruit divorced individuals, using purposeful and snowball sampling to gather insights on how hubristic pride affected their communication in previous marriages. I explained how I conducted in person and Zoom interviews with divorced individuals using an interview protocol to guide the process, and I ensured rapport building and neutrality. Additionally, participants for this study were recruited via Nextdoor Neighbor, Facebook, and referrals, providing confidentiality and validity through informed consent, pseudonyms, and secure data storage. Subsequently, I shared how I analyzed data from interviews with divorced individuals using Saldaña's (2021) descriptive coding process, organizing and categorizing the information to identify themes related to how hubristic pride affected communication in their previous marriages. To ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in my research, I used member checks, rich descriptions, an audit trail, and reflexivity, while maintaining a reflexive journal and seeking peer examination to accurately capture participants' perspectives. Moreover, ethical standards were maintained by obtaining informed consent, protecting participant confidentiality with pseudonyms, and securely storing data, while informing participants of their voluntary involvement and right to withdraw at any time.

In Chapter 4, the findings of my study will detail personal and organizational factors that affected participants and/or their experiences during the study, which may impact the interpretation of the results. Relevant participant demographics and characteristics are disclosed. I provide a comprehensive overview of each participant,

including the location, duration, and recording details of each interview, while noting any deviations or unusual circumstances that occur. Additionally, I explain the inductive process of transitioning from coded units to broader categories and themes, detailing specific codes, categories, and themes with illustrative quotations. To enhance trustworthiness, I detail my implementation of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability during this study. Furthermore, I explain the results by addressing the research question, present the data, discuss any discrepant cases, and include any tables or figures as necessary for this study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to understand how divorcees experience hubristic pride affecting communication in their previous marital relationships. Hubristic pride is known as a negative self-conscious emotion (Castonguay et al., 2015; Dickens & Robins, 2022; Tangney & Fischer, 1995; Tracy & Robins, 2007a). This emotion contributes to maladaptive behaviors that are expressed through physical actions and verbal communications. The current study explored the experiences of divorced individuals to extract key insights into their perceptions of hubristic pride within their previous marriages. By exploring these perspectives, the research provided valuable understanding of interpersonal dynamics and their impact on relationships. The findings may be significant for professionals seeking to enhance client communication strategies and support personal growth in postdivorce contexts.

The research question addressed how divorcees' experiences with hubristic pride influenced communication dynamics within their previous marriage. The interview questions explored how communication and emotional interactions influenced marital relationships, especially within the context of divorce. The study focused on personal experiences, relational behaviors, and the impact of hubristic pride on communication dynamics. The findings may be significant from a research perspective, addressing an overlooked topic in the literature. These findings may help identify the root issues in marital communication, enabling professionals to address and improve this aspect of relationship dynamics.

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology, detailing the procedures undertaken in conducting the study and the key insights derived from the analysis. This chapter also provides an overview of the study's setting, participant demographics, data collection and analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness. A summary of the research findings, along with a summary of key insights is also presented.

Setting

To the best of my knowledge, no personal or organizational factors influenced the participants or their experiences during the study. All interviews were conducted in person (e.g., at home or in a safe and secure location), or via Zoom to uphold participants' privacy, in accordance with the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. Prior to their interviews, participants received the consent form via email and responded by typing "I consent." I am confident that the interview setting did not influence participants' responses. Additionally, participants did not encounter any uncomfortable or inappropriate situations, such as visiting an agency where their status as divorcees might have been disclosed. Conducting the interviews in person and through Zoom calls allowed participants to engage in the study within the privacy and comfort of their homes. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes.

Demographics

Demographic data in this study provided context for interpreting findings, ensuring applicability across populations, identifying trends, and maintaining transparency. The data also helped me assess biases, enhance replicability, and support

evidence-based practices contributing to a deeper understanding of the study's conclusions (see Hughes et al., 2022). I recruited seven recently divorced women and one man from Arizona and Colorado, ranging in age from 25 to 68 years. All participants were White and had attained some college education or a college degree. Participants were recruited through invitations distributed via Facebook and Nextdoor Neighbor, as well as through individuals personally known to me who volunteered for the study. Additionally, the use of snowball sampling facilitated recruitment by allowing people to share information about the study within their personal networks, leading to an expanded pool of respondents. The inclusion criteria required three components: (a) must be 18 years of age and older, (b) must be divorced less than 2 years, and (c) must not be actively involved in ongoing child custody proceedings. All participants reported having been divorced for less than 2 years and indicated that they had no child custody-related concerns. All demographic data were self-reported.

Table 1*Demographic Information*

Alias	Age	Gender	Length of marriage	Time since divorced	State
Tonya	51	Female	29 years	1 year 6 months	Arizona
Melanie	25	Female	4 years	1 month	Arizona
Amy	29	Female	1 year 8 months	1 year	Colorado
Evangeline	37	Female	6 years	8 months	Colorado
Rachelle	62	Female	10 years	9 months	Colorado
Stan	69	Male	20 years	15 months	Colorado
Alyssa	34	Female	2 years 6 months	10 days	Colorado
Jessica	39	Female	19 years	6 months	Colorado

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using an interview protocol, through which demographic information was gathered as well as insights into the divorcees' experiences of hubristic pride and its impact on marital communication. I developed a set of interview questions consisting of ten open-ended questions, with one exception—an additional question included specifically for clarification of length of marriage and divorce. The interview questions primarily explored the influence of communication and emotional dynamics within marital relationships, particularly in the context of divorce. I focused on emphasizing personal experiences, interpersonal behaviors, and the role of hubristic pride in shaping communication patterns. All participants provided complete responses to the interview questions, with no withdrawals from the study. Additionally, no unexpected situations arose during the data collection process.

Data were gathered from eight participants through a semistructured interview. Given the flexible format of the interviews, additional questions were incorporated as needed throughout the interview process. Interviews were scheduled in advance with each participant upon receipt of their signed consent form, with scheduling arrangements prioritized to ensure participant accommodation. Initially, interview scheduling was conducted via email. Upon receiving participant inquiries, I responded with available time slots and provided the necessary details, including the attached consent form. The participants who were interested replied with their consent, and a time was set up for meeting either in person or via a Zoom call. To ensure the preservation of raw data for analysis, each interview was recorded. Each participant provided responses to the interview questions while the session was recorded via Zoom and a voice memo recorder on my phone. For in person interviews (two of my participants were interviewed in safe and secure locations), I utilized two phones with voice memo recorders to ensure accurate recording of the sessions. The recordings were essential for conducting a thorough and accurate evaluation of the information provided by participants. Upon completing each interview, I expressed gratitude to the participant and subsequently stopped the recording. The data collection process spanned approximately eight weeks to compile all raw data. The data collection process remained consistent as outlined in Chapter 3. Furthermore, no unexpected circumstances arose during data collection.

Data Analysis

Conducting a basic qualitative analysis enabled me to employ both first and second coding cycles, allowing for the identification of categories and themes derived

from the coding process. I started by carefully listening to and reviewing the transcription to ensure its accuracy in reflecting the participant's exact words. I carefully reviewed the interview to gain a comprehensive understanding of its similarities, differences, and key elements relevant to the research question before commencing the coding process. As I started the coding process, I identified key words and phrases related to the concept of hubristic pride. During the initial coding phase, I employed in vivo coding to accurately reflect the participants' own words and convey their intended meaning. It is important to note that not all coding was conducted using in vivo methods. For certain key words and phrases, I applied descriptive coding to effectively capture the core meaning of the information provided. Using these codes, I identified patterns by noting similarities and differences in participants' interview responses. Each participant expressed unique perspectives and communicated in distinct ways, yet many of their responses shared common themes and similarities. I identified common categories and themes among participants, initiating the process of shaping an understanding of potential directions for future research. Upon completing the analysis of codes, I organized the data into categories based on the principle of similarity, systematically copying and pasting the codes under each category within a table. The next step involved examining the categories to develop overarching themes. Applying the principle of contextual similarity, I aligned each category with its corresponding theme. After completing the data analysis, I structured an outline to organize the findings, which greatly enhanced the interpretation process. The analysis primarily explored participants' emotions and behaviors, their personal responses to their ex-spouses, and their experiences of their ex-spouses'

reactions toward them. Table 2 presents the categories and themes that emerged from the data analysis. No discrepant cases were identified in the data, likely due to the constraints of the raw data's limited scope.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To ensure internal validity or credibility in this qualitative study, I employed multiple strategies, including member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, reflexivity, and peer examination. Member checks enhanced credibility by enabling participants to review and provide input on the emerging findings, ensuring that my interpretations aligned with their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, I practiced reflexivity by acknowledging and disclosing my biases and assumptions, recognizing that a researcher's values and expectations can influence the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Peer examination further reinforced credibility, as discussions with my committee provided impartial feedback on my research. To enhance accuracy, I applied clear and transparent data reporting, ensuring that the research methods, data collection, and analysis were thoroughly documented. Data saturation was achieved by including a sufficient number of participants and gathering ample data to comprehensively address the research question. These combined strategies established a strong framework for maintaining credibility in the study.

Transferability

Transferability, also known as external validity, pertains to the extent to which a study's findings can be applied to different contexts or conditions (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016). It is sustained through a detailed qualitative description of participant engagement and the development of emerging themes. I utilized a detailed narrative or a rich description to provide a highly detailed and comprehensive portrayal of the research setting, participants' experiences, and the results of the study. This approach ensures that readers can fully understand the context and determine the applicability of the results to other settings. Additionally, I employed typical sampling, a method that enhances transferability by demonstrating how representative an individual is in relation to similar cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study examines adult women and one adult man (N = 8; see Creswell & Creswell, 2022), utilizing a typical sampling approach and achieving data saturation to ensure comprehensive and meaningful analysis. The use of rich descriptions and user generalizability reinforces the study's transferability, ensuring its applicability to broader contexts. Additionally, the findings provide a foundation for future research, highlighting opportunities for further exploration.

Dependability

To ensure the dependability of this study, I employed an audit trail, maintaining detailed records of data collection methods, category development, and decision-making throughout the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This process included reflections, memos, and documentation of challenges encountered, ensuring a transparent and systematic approach to analysis. Additionally, standardized research designs and protocols were followed, with consistency checks and meticulous note-taking to prevent deviations from established procedures. During interviews, I adhered to a structured format, presenting questions clearly and allowing participants the freedom to elaborate.

Lastly, transparency in reporting was emphasized, providing a step-by-step account of the research process, including limitations and challenges, to reinforce dependability and ensure a comprehensive and credible study.

Confirmability

To ensure confirmability, I employed peer examination, an audit trail, and reflexivity. Peer examination helped validate the credibility of findings, with my dissertation committee reviewing the methodology. The audit trail provided a transparent record of data collection, coding, and decision-making, ensuring alignment with established protocols. Reflexivity, maintained through a journal documenting biases and assumptions, minimized subjective influence and enhanced accuracy in interpreting participants' experiences. By following evidence-based coding and analysis procedures, and actively seeking emerging themes and potential outliers, I reinforced the objectivity and reliability of the study's conclusions.

Results

This section aims to address the research question: What are the experiences of divorcees' hubristic pride affecting communication in their previous marital relationships? The research findings were derived from seven divorced women and one man, focusing on their experiences with hubristic pride and its impact on communication in their previous marriages. The research yielded four primary themes and identified 14 distinct categories. These themes provided insight into how hubristic pride influences communication dynamics. The four central themes that emerged in response to the research question are as follows: Theme 1: emotional immaturity, Theme 2: defense

mechanisms/hubristic pride, Theme 3: emotional reactivity, and Theme 4: unhealthy interactions. Table 2 presents the results of manual coding, highlighting the four key themes and fourteen overarching categories, accompanied by participant narratives.

Table 2

Themes, Categories, and Illustrative Participant Responses

Theme	Category	Example quote
Emotional immaturity	Lack of accountability	“Things that would truly be bothersome to him, he would bottle up, and then it would explode later on.” (Evangeline) “But she had a really severe anger problem.” (Stan)
	Emotional regulation	
	Emotional disconnection	
Defense mechanisms/ hubristic pride	Entitlement	“was a need of his, and if he didn’t get that, then other things were going to, like other negative things, consequences were going to happen.” (Melanie)
	Manipulation	
	Arrogance/egotism	
	False sense of control	
Emotional reactivity	Vulnerability	“like I would just totally be, whatever, and just ignore him, because I was just done.” (Tonya) “I just didn’t say anything, which is where I think the resentment came from.” (Amy)
	Ambivalence	
	Resentment	
Unhealthy interactions	Conflict escalation	“There were very much things that were, okay, acceptable for him to do that if I were to do them, that was not, not acceptable.” (Alyssa) “. . . he just didn’t feel like a safe person to share feelings with anymore, and so I stopped doing that.” (Jessica)
	Coping fatigue	
	Power imbalance	
	Emotional neglect	

Theme 1: Emotional Immaturity

Emotional immaturity appeared to serve as an antecedent to three additional emergent themes, including emotional reactivity, manifestations of hubristic pride, and patterns of unhealthy interpersonal interactions. All participants identified manifestations of emotional immaturity in their former spouses during the course of their previous marriages. The following examples illustrate how this theme was evidenced within participants’ narratives: “He would just ignore me; he did everything he could to shirk

those responsibilities and to get out of it” (Tonya), “she would turn very defensive, I think she was just unaware in a lot of ways” (Amy), “No expression on his face whatsoever” (Rachelle). The participant, Evangeline, illustrated the presence of emotional immaturity within her relationship with her husband:

And I just got annoyed and I turned around, I’m like, “What?” And he like, throws his hands up and walks away. So, he leaves me in a crowd of people to walk down a sidewalk, and a drunk man assaulted me. Yeah. I scream, of course he hears me scream when he comes back, and all these people bombard me during this moment, and I am frozen. I can’t think, I can’t. Sorry, I’m... I can’t think. I can’t speak, nothing. And they’re all asking me the same question, “Are you okay? Are you okay?” Which makes me even more, like, upset. Finally, when I’m, like, able to like kind of come to, I’m like, “I’m fine, I’m fine, I’m fine.” Because I wanted them all to go away. He was like, “Okay, she’s fine.” That’s how he took it. “Okay, she’s fine. She said she’s fine, she’s fine.” And we get to the parking garage, and I’m like, can we stop for a second? And I have, like, a meltdown. And he doesn’t understand why. And words were exchanged, and I remember him saying, “Well, what do you want from me? I’m not gonna, coddle you.” And so, um, you know, that pissed me off even more. Yeah, and so we argued in the car, and then I didn’t talk to him on the whole ride home.

(Evangeline, personal interview)

Melanie reflected on her experiences, highlighting patterns of emotional immaturity:

And if I ever confronted him about anything, he would threaten to hurt himself, or kill himself, or not come home or things like that a lot. So. . . I mean, I was really afraid for what would happen. So, a lot of the time, I would just give in to it. I would just say, yeah, do what you need to do because I would rather have, I would rather be alone all night at home with the baby while you're out with friends, than have you hurting yourself or, or you know, not coming home at all or whatever. (Melanie, personal interview)

Additionally, several acknowledged the presence of emotionally immature behaviors in themselves, reflecting a degree of self-awareness regarding their own relational dynamics: "I'd just be like, hmm, whatever, like I would just totally be whatever and just ignore him" (Tonya), "I really never approached her much about what I considered to be a problem" (Stan), "Like, if I annoy her enough, she'll just stop, because I was past the whole like damsel in distress thing" (Amy), "I do think that I have, like, this feeling of, like, superiority over him" (Jessica), "I thought I was smarter than him...I felt like he should have known how to do [stuff] at this point in his life and didn't know how to do, I put him down for...the typical adult things" (Evangeline).

Three primary categories emerged that shaped this overarching theme: lack of accountability, emotional regulation, and emotional disconnection. The following excerpts from participants illustrate the dimension of lack of accountability: "He just dragged his feet on everything. He put everything off until the last second" (Alyssa), "He would say no, or he would say yes and not do it, or he would say yes and do it halfway" (Melanie), "He would have been completely fine just continuing on with our marriage.

He didn't think there was anything wrong with it" (Jessica). Rachelle provided the following account of her husband's lack of accountability within their marriage:

And he didn't like to work. So, he'd get a job and then he'd quit, and then he'd get a job, and then he'd quit, and he just now got a job and he quit. It was like, what are you doing? It was one excuse after another. (Rachelle, personal interview)

Stan shared an example of his ex-wife's lack of accountability in their relationship:

I mean, I don't ever think I heard her admit she was wrong or apologize for doing something. And that to me, is a pride issue. You know, where, you know, you just can't say, "You know what, I got really angry last night, and I'm sorry. And I'll try to be better," you know? That's pretty simple. So that was kind of her personality. (Stan, personal interview)

Participants frequently recounted instances in which their spouses exhibited poor emotional regulation. The following examples provide insight into how these struggles impacted the dynamics of the relationship: "She had an absolute maddening fit one night and threw a liquor bottle at me and it broke and cut my hand all up" (Stan), "The doctor said, 'The nodule we took out of your [Rachelle] lung was cancer.' No expression on his face whatsoever" (Rachelle), "She would just continue where she would get more elevated or more angry or more agitated" (Amy). Tonya described an instance in which her husband demonstrated a lack of emotional regulation:

Like, if I got him a nice Christmas present, he would get mad at me, like literally get mad in front of everybody, and make me [feel] so horrible. Even though I

found like such a great deal, and it was cheap and all that kind of stuff, he would still get mad. And I tried to do fun exciting things for him to make it interesting. And I don't know, he just always found a way to just be mad or something about it. So I felt like Christmas, he was always mad about something. (Tonya, personal interview)

This reflects Amy's perspective on her relationship with her wife at the time:

I feel like it was very obvious when the switch would change. But we were so deep into it, she would just continue where she would get more elevated or more angry or more agitated... I think the intention for me when I did that was to like essentially squash it as fast as I could. (Amy, personal interview)

Moreover, emotional disconnection emerged as a prominent category in the research. The following examples illustrate how this disconnection manifested within participants' relationships: "Our communication was a problem, always, from day one... there was a long period that I felt like we just coexisted" (Tonya), "It slowly became, instead of a partnership, a mother-child type of communication" (Evangeline) "When I asked him what he thought when I got cancer, he said, 'I was wondering what I'd do with all your stuff'" (Rachelle). Jessica shared her personal experience of emotional disconnection in her relationship with her ex-spouse:

[H]e would say things like, well, you know, "I can't supply everything that you need, like emotionally." So, he told me, like, "Go get a friend or a dog or, like, something to like supply that for me." But it was just because, like, it was done in, like, a very unloving way. (Jessica, personal interview)

Alyssa recounted an instance in her relationship that illustrated emotional disconnection:

I would maybe say almost like a little kind of detached, keeping emotions out of it to the extent that I could until I was, you know, pushed far enough. I mean, I think that was, they were used against me, like he straight up told me one time that crying during the conversation on my part was manipulation, that I was crying to be manipulative. So I, yeah, after a certain point, you know, I keep those to myself too, or try to. Just, he wasn't interested in that level of sharing, you know, in our relationship. (Alyssa, personal interview)

Together with emotional dysregulation and lack of accountability, emotional disconnection reflects core aspects of emotional immaturity, emphasizing the challenges individuals may face in navigating relationships with emotional insight, self-regulation, and personal responsibility.

Theme 2: Defense Mechanisms/Hubristic Pride

Across participants, the influence of hubristic pride on communication within their prior marriages was reflected in a range of defense mechanisms, including entitlement, manipulation, multiple manifestations consistent with the core facets of hubristic pride, and a false sense of control. The examples below demonstrate how entitlement emerged as a category throughout participants' narratives: "and he's looking at me like, like he deserves to do this" (Rachelle), "I found out he had stolen almost \$10,000 from my grandma and applied for a couple of loans in her name" (Melanie), "Then complain that we're not having sex, but when we need to have sex to have a child,

you refuse to have sex during that time” (Evangeline). Tonya provided insight into the ways her husband demonstrated a sense of entitlement:

He’s like, what do you want? And I’m like, an apology would be nice for how you treated me, and he goes, I did nothing wrong. So, there’s never acknowledgement. There just, he just won’t acknowledge any, any wrongdoing. He just won’t. (Tonya, personal interview)

Amy described her experience with her ex-wife:

I needed like, time to process, and like, gather my thoughts if we were arguing, and she wanted to fix it, like right then and there. Which didn’t work well. And I just feel like she, it was just like we were trying to say the same thing in a lot of different ways, but there needed to be someone who was right. And nine times out of 10 it had to be her, and for me that felt very inauthentic to me. (Amy, personal interview)

Manipulation emerged as a recurring category within the broader theme of defense mechanisms. Participants frequently described experiences in which their spouses engaged in behaviors such as stonewalling, aggression, and gaslighting—tactics they perceived as manipulative efforts to control or deflect within the relationship. “well, you’ve just got to learn to put up with my moods” (Stan), “as the responsibilities got heavier on him, he just got meaner and more deceitful and more manipulative” (Melanie), “I was just fed up with his behavior, and was trying to talk to him about his behavior, and he’s like, ‘You’re just acting out cause you’re emotional’” (Evangeline). Alyssa

recounted instances in which her husband engaged in stonewalling behavior during their interactions:

And, you know, I myself encountered some really, like, dark times just being treated like this. I mean, getting the silent treatment for days on end, you know? When I did have good intentions, and I know that, so it doesn't matter what he, you know, thinks. (Alyssa, personal interview)

Rachelle provided the following example of gaslighting as she experienced it:

Because he was just all about himself. Just taking and taking, smug and like. . . And when I confronted him, he goes, "Well, it's my loan. The loan's in my name." I go, "But it's a loan against the equity of my house." He was like, denying that he even understood the connection.

Arrogance and egotism—both facets of hubristic pride—emerged as the most prominent defense mechanisms across participants' experiences. Though hubristic pride encompasses seven distinct facets, these two appeared more frequently and with greater intensity than the others. The following excerpts illustrate instances of arrogance and egotism as described by participants: "There was no communication. He would talk about himself, his projects, his stories of his childhood. He never asked me, 'Where did you grow up, or what was it like'" (Rachelle), "He could not ever be wrong or make a mistake...he would put me down" (Tonya). Tonya also stated, "and to him it was about him looking good, like he wanted to be the good guy, and I was the bad guy." Jessica described her ex-spouse as exhibiting egotistical behavior based on her personal experience:

And so, like, even when we were, like, going through our divorce and everything, like, he swore me to secrecy to, like, not tell anybody that we were getting a divorce because he didn't want, like, anybody to know that, like, he wasn't perfect and he wasn't living this, like, perfect life with the perfect wife and perfect kids and like, all the things. (Jessica, personal interview)

Alyssa described an incident in which her husband demonstrated arrogant behavior:

If he's mad, he's going to lash out, he would say things like, if I continued a conversation past the point where he even wanted to be done talking about it, he would say, like, "You're poking the bear." I'm, uh, what was that? I don't want to be a jerk, but, and then [he] proceed[ed] to be a jerk. Like, he just didn't have the capacity to feel big feelings and still be decent. (Alyssa, personal interview)

Additionally, Amy described a situation in which her wife displayed arrogance:

But for me to like comment on that [wife's emotional reactions] or say something about that or be like you know, I feel like you're having like a real big reaction right now, I think we need to take space, or you know whatever, super not eloquent way. I would say that to her. Then she'd be like, "Don't therapize me, don't tell me how I feel." Like so she would automatically think it was then an attack even though my intention was to like help and get her to kind of notice what was happening. She just wasn't able to hear me, and she was like, extremely emotionally driven. (Amy, personal interview)

The final category identified is a false sense of control, which encompasses behaviors characterized by hypocrisy and deceit. Although these behaviors may also be

classified as forms of manipulation, they are presented here as a distinct category to offer an alternative interpretive lens. Individuals who exhibit these behaviors often do so as a means of asserting control over the situation. However, these efforts often create an illusion of control for the individual, despite their actual lack of influence over the situation. The following excerpts reflect participants' accounts of their ex-spouses' hypocritical and deceitful behaviors: "And he had to be viewed as the innocent one in the marriage, like he would actually lie just to have the better. . . be the upper hand or the better of the two" (Tonya), "But very, very selfish and just. . . like I said, his goals were different than what he said. So, just dishonest and self-serving" (Melanie). Alyssa highlights perceived discrepancies between her husband's principles and his actions:

I mean for a while, it was, you know, it seemed really selfish what he was doing with like, just staying in bed all day, every day, and you know, I was left to do everything. Whatever, again, whatever degree of mental illness, I don't know. But, I mean, that it's, he chose to do what he wanted to do, which was nothing, while there were things that needed to be done, that he just wasn't gonna, wasn't gonna touch. . . I wondered which of the seven aspects or whatever, would might be included, like, a double standard. Like, there were very much things that were, okay, acceptable for him to do that if I were to do them, that was not, not acceptable. (Alyssa, personal interview)

Tonya reported perceived hypocrisy in her husband's behavior:

And he had to be perceived as, I guess, yeah, this is when he kept saying he would get mad at me and blame me for things that his siblings did because he had to be

the good guy. He had to look, and he goes, I had to get mad at someone and they wouldn't care so I got mad at you because I care. (Tonya, personal interview)

The observed defense mechanisms were subsequently accompanied by emotional reactivity.

Theme 3: Emotional Reactivity

Participants who exhibited defense mechanisms also demonstrated core features of emotional immaturity, which contributed to heightened emotional reactivity within the relationship—for both them and their partners. Emotional reactions were classified into the categories of vulnerability, ambivalence, and resentment, each comprising distinct subthemes. Participants conveyed their experiences of vulnerability in indirect ways during the interview process. “But then closer to the end, I was just getting so angry, and I’m not an angry person” (Melanie), “I felt like I was scared to communicate” (Amy). Rachelle articulated how she tends to respond when feeling vulnerable when confronted with her husband’s temper:

He had the temper. That was his only emotion, really. He’d get really happy if we were doing something he liked to do. And so that’s why I kept trying to make things happen that he liked, so that he’d be in a good mood. Otherwise, he’s miserable to be around. So, I’m trying to manipulate the whole world to make him happy so that I can finally be relaxed and be happy. So, yeah, and then my emotions, I cried a lot, and he would pat my back and say, “Stop crying. Oh, don’t cry.” It’s like, how does that help? Telling me not to let my feelings out. Why don’t you ask me what I’m crying about? (Rachelle, personal interview)

Stan conveyed his sense of vulnerability through the actions he felt obligated to take in response to his wife's shifting emotional states:

And it got to the point a little bit, where I don't know if you, if this makes sense to you, but I would walk in the house for work and the first thing I wanted to do was kind of take the temperature. And like, is she in a good mood, or is she in a bad mood? And how do I need to act if she's really in the volatile stage where I've gotta really be careful, because the slightest thing I can say will set her off, you know. I'm leaving clutter around because I have a pair of shoes in the family room, you know, and it was, it was kind of in the realm of the absurd, when she got mad. (Stan, personal interview)

Over time, participants developed feelings of ambivalence toward their ex-spouses. The excerpts below demonstrate how this ambivalence was articulated during the interviews: "And there were other times where he just complained about things that I already told him how to fix five times, and I just didn't care anymore" (Evangeline), "And then we would fight it out. It was a very much like a cyclical thing for us, um until I was just like okay, like I'm not, I'm not doing this" (Amy), "I felt very, like, disconnected emotionally" (Melanie). Tonya's narrative reveals conflicting emotions regarding her husband and his actions, indicative of underlying ambivalence:

I would be like, "Fine you can do whatever, but I can do whatever I want." And I can dress up, and I can be beautiful, and I can get any kind of attention I wanted from other guys. Like if that's the way you want to play the game, that's what I'm going to do. And I got overly confident and would hang out with friends and I

would avoid spending time with him because I was just done. And it was mean, it was mean that I was, I did not care, or I did not care. (Tonya, personal interview)

Jessica conveyed a sense of ambivalence in her reflections on her relationship with her husband:

I didn't want to pretend. I just wanted to live my life... it just felt like, so fake to me a lot of the time because, like, our marriage was falling apart. But we just, like, did it for everybody else. (Jessica, personal interview)

Resentment, identified as a form of emotional reactivity, was commonly observed in the study. The following examples illustrate how resentment was reflected across their narratives: "One of the things I did was I drank more... I don't want to blame my drinking on her... but that was my response to her anger" (Stan), "I'm wrestling with this question, like, was any of it ever real?... I feel like, like a real bait and switch type of vibe" (Alyssa). Amy explained that her resentment escalated quickly, largely due to ineffective and dysfunctional communication within the relationship:

And then I remember like, having like, while we were planning our wedding, like some reservations about it. I feel like I built resentment pretty fast during my marriage...and that was kind of the main catalyst for me to be like, mmm. . . I don't really like this anymore. I think we, I think we didn't know how to communicate in our marriage. We didn't really. (Amy, personal interview)

Melanie's resentment toward her husband was reflected in her reluctance to spend time in his presence:

And so, it definitely affected things, because I just didn't want to be around him. I was so, I didn't want...there were some things that I didn't want to work through. I didn't want to spend time with him, because I just, didn't want to see his face. I didn't want to spend time with someone that was gonna be so much... pain and so much heartache. (Melanie, personal interview)

Consequently, these emotional reactions contributed to patterns of unhealthy relational interactions.

Theme 4: Unhealthy Interactions

As the fourth and final theme, unhealthy interactions typically involve patterns of communication that undermines emotional safety, mutual respect, and relational balance. The primary categories identified are conflict escalation, power imbalance, emotional neglect, and coping fatigue. The following excerpts illustrate participants' experiences in relation to these themes: "we ended up back at the same place, one of us has to be right, one of us has to be wrong" (Amy), "he would always pull away. . . I was always the one to come to him and attempt resolution" (Alyssa), "he would say, 'Well, I'm doing it anyway, you can do it with me or. . . I'm gonna do it without you'" (Melanie), Tonya stated, "every step of the way I was met with lies and more lies. So it, it was very lonely," and "I tried harder. I did. I tried harder, and for much, much longer, than he did" (Tonya).

These excerpts illustrate participants' experiences in relation to the category of conflict escalation. Amy described her conflicts as cyclical in nature, noting that this recurring pattern contributed to their escalation over time:

So, it was very much like we would like, fight it out, no real resolution and then we'd be fine for a little bit. And then we would fight it out. It was a very much like a cyclical thing for us, um until I was just like, okay like I'm not, I'm not doing this. (Amy, personal interview)

Stan outlined a pattern in which his conflicts followed a predictable cycle:

I got, I started drinking more, and that became a problem because when I was drinking and she got angry at me, I would get angry at her, and we would. . . And, you know, it finally got to the point where she left. (Stan, personal interview)

Additionally, Jessica recounted the ways in which conflict within her marriage progressively escalated:

I think that almost like, any conversation that was uncomfortable, like, got to a point where we were either like yelling at each other or like, somebody was crying or somebody got frustrated. It didn't ever feel like we were like, having a conversation where like, the other person was trying to like hear or be heard. So, we were both just like very confrontational. (Jessica, personal interview)

The next category of unhealthy relational dynamics is power imbalance. The following excerpts from the interviews illustrate how power imbalances manifested within participants' relationships: "I gave until I was empty. And then he was just, as soon as I couldn't give any more, he couldn't suck anymore, he was done with me" (Rachelle), "He was fine with me being the mother of him, you know, me being a therapist, me being the cook, the provider, the friend, the maid, everything, and him just

existing” (Evangeline). Tonya shared an example illustrating how she was often responsible for making the majority of decisions within the relationship:

It was just the whole, I felt like I was running out of breath, trying to explain things to him. We just, we had a lot of issues with my daughter and trying to talk to him about what to do, “What do you think we should do?” He could never make a decision on his own. I had to be the ultimate, the one to ultimately decide what was going to happen. (Tonya, personal interview)

Evangeline highlighted a power imbalance in her relationship, noting that she was solely responsible for initiating communication later on in her marriage:

And so it slowly became, instead of a partnership, a mother-child, you know, type of communication. And then it got way worse later on. Cause in the beginning, it wasn't the... I'm having to tell you, we're having this conversation four or five times. That never happened. It wasn't until the end, like the last couple years. (Evangeline, personal interview)

Emotional neglect emerged as another key category of unhealthy relational dynamics. The following excerpts illustrate how participants experienced emotional neglect within their relationships: “I would sit there and cry and he would literally have like nothing on his face... he wouldn't want to come hug me or anything” (Evangeline), “But you just couldn't have those conversations with her” (Stan). Rachele described how her husband emotionally neglected her during one of the most vulnerable periods of her life:

And I went in from a lung operation and ended up getting pneumonia and sepsis and almost dying and he did not care. In fact, I couldn't breathe one night, I'm like, "Call 911." "Oh, just go back to sleep." I'm like, "No, I need to go to the hospital. I can't even breathe. I have pneumonia, it's so bad." It was just closing up, and I had been sweating and waking up and sweating for two, three days, and he was ignoring that. It was like he wanted me to die. (Rachelle, personal interview)

Melanie shared that she felt emotionally neglected, as she was consistently overwhelmed and her husband failed to take any action to support or alleviate her distress:

There were things as simple as, I was eight months pregnant, and I asked if he would rub my feet at the end of a long day because my feet were hurting, and he just flat out said "No"...and would never, would never do that. And I felt like I was drowning with the housework and childcare and everything, so I was like, will you please take care of the trashes? Like, I will do everything else if you'll take out the trashes, and it would never happen. The trashes would literally pile up until I eventually did it because he just wouldn't. And so things that seem basic and seem like, well, that's just part of being a family that's part of being an adult. That's, you know, those kinds of things just wouldn't be, wouldn't be respected, wouldn't be met. He would say no, or he would say yes and not do it, or he would say yes and do it halfway or so anything that, anything that I asked for was, was seen as unnecessary or seen as too big of a, too big of a request. (Melanie, personal interview)

The final category of unhealthy relational dynamics is coping fatigue, characterized by individuals feeling emotionally exhausted or burned out from sustained relational strain. The following excerpts from participant interviews illustrate the behaviors and experiences associated with this form of fatigue: “I’m just gonna do everything myself, like you’re not gonna help me, I’m tired of reminding you. I’m tired of asking you...” (Amy), “And then, you know, after you try that enough times, you kind of are like, well, you know, everything meaningful and significant is just gonna start a conflict...and go nowhere” (Alyssa), “And I finally just burnt out because there was no feedback” (Rachelle). Tonya described feeling emotionally exhausted and burned out as a result of her spouse’s ongoing behaviors:

I had to be in charge and make it happen. Um, you know, just anything we did. I had to take the lead because he wouldn’t do it. It would never get done. So, I felt like a lot of the time, I was, I was tired. I was exhausted. I was running out of breath. Like, like, “Am I getting through to you?” You know, it was a one-person conversation, basically. That was a lot of our conversation, was just one sided.

(Tonya, personal interview)

Melanie also expressed feeling discouraged and emotionally drained due to her husband’s behaviors:

I felt really beat down a lot of the time. I would just keep trying so hard to make it work and to go to counseling and to fix my problems and to just be open and vulnerable and, and every step of the way I was met with lies and more lies.

(Melanie, personal interview)

Although these themes are deeply interrelated, each possesses distinctive characteristics that will be further explored in the findings presented in Chapter 5. Consequently, a noteworthy finding emerged from the research, as detailed in the section below.

Discrepancies

No significant discrepancies were identified during the course of the research process. Markedly, the sole male participant in the study, Stan, offered perspectives on communication and emotional interactions that diverged somewhat from those of the female participants. His reflections on his ex-spouse were notably more amiable, with limited expression of negative sentiment. Factors such as his age and gender may have influenced these differences. Nonetheless, Stan's narrative contributed meaningfully to the study, as he articulated experiences of emotional immaturity, defense mechanisms, emotional reactivity, and unhealthy relational dynamics—aligning with key themes identified in the accounts of the female participants. These considerations will be further addressed in the limitations outlined in Chapter 5.

Summary

In response to the research question, the findings illuminated participants' experiences and the role of hubristic pride in shaping communication within their previous marriages. These accounts offered insight into the origins of hubristic pride, revealing its foundation in emotional immaturity. Lack of accountability, emotional regulation, and emotional disconnection emerged as the most prominent indicators of emotional immaturity. Consequently, hubristic pride, often functioning as a masked defense mechanism in the forms of entitlement, manipulation, facets of hubristic pride,

and a false sense of control, served to conceal emotional vulnerability, and hubristic pride contributed to heightened emotional reactivity in both spouses. Furthermore, this heightened emotional reactivity contributes to patterns of unhealthy interaction between spouses, exacerbating conflict escalations, coping fatigue, power imbalance, and emotional neglect. In this way, hubristic pride, rooted in emotional immaturity, negatively impacts spousal communication.

Chapter 5 serves as the culminating section of this study, offering a comprehensive synthesis of the research findings. It articulates the study's implications, addresses its methodological and conceptual limitations, and presents recommendations for future scholarly inquiry. This final chapter revisits the central research purpose, question, methodology, and key results, providing an integrative interpretation of the data within the broader context of theoretical and practical relevance. Emphasis is placed on the contributions of this research to the field of psychology, where the insights derived may inform both clinical and academic perspectives. Ultimately, this chapter lays the groundwork for continued exploration and serves as a foundation for subsequent investigations into the topic.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how divorcees experience hubristic pride affecting communication in their previous marital relationships. This qualitative study explored how hubristic pride influenced communication by analyzing divorced individuals' personal experiences through a basic qualitative design grounded in social constructivism. The study explored participants' experiences and perceptions to develop a deeper understanding of the impact of hubristic pride on spousal communication dynamics. Guided by social exchange theory, hubristic pride was analyzed as a social emotion that disrupts relational balance and hinders cooperation, offering insight into the dynamics of past marital interactions. The findings demonstrated that communication was significantly influenced by emotional responses and behavioral patterns, ultimately revealing emotional immaturity, reliance on defensive mechanisms, emotional reactivity, and the emergence of unhealthy interactions.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings highlighted the following core themes: emotional immaturity, defense mechanisms, emotional reactivity, and unhealthy interactions. Emotional immaturity, often conceptualized as a deficit in emotional intelligence, emerged as a recurring theme throughout the coding process, underscoring its relevance in participants' relational dynamics and communicative patterns. Emotional intelligence, coined by Salovey and Mayer (1990), is described as a form of social intelligence involving an individual's capacity to recognize, comprehend, and manage their emotions, as well as to perceive and respond appropriately to the emotions of others using this emotional insight

to inform thought and guide behavior. Gibson (2015) defined emotional immaturity as being egocentric, emotionally volatile, deficient in empathic understanding, and unable to acknowledge or affirm the emotional realities of themselves and others.

Theme 1: Emotional Immaturity

During the interviews, it became apparent that many participants perceived their ex-spouses as exhibiting dark triad traits (see Paulhus & Williams, 2002) or behaviors. The findings align with existing research on emotional immaturity and indicate that emotional immaturity manifests along a spectrum. Some ex-spouses demonstrated a majority of dark triad traits associated with emotional immaturity (see Ináncsi et al., 2018), whereas others exhibited only a limited subset. Individuals exhibiting emotional immaturity were more likely to develop maladaptive attachment styles during childhood (see Jacoby et al., 2017). Individuals exhibiting emotional immaturity are also more prone to experiencing lower levels of relationship satisfaction (Kansky, 2018). A gradual decline of relationship satisfaction was observed over time in each participant's relationship with emotional immaturity potentially serving as an underlying contributing factor (see Mozas-Alonso et al., 2022).

A prominent dimension of emotional immaturity was the tendency to avoid personal accountability. Individuals exhibiting hubristic pride tend to engage more frequently in irresponsible behaviors (Carver et al., 2010; Ho et al., 2016; Krettenauer & Casey, 2015). Whiting and Cravens (2016) noted that couples who fail to take accountability for their actions are more likely to avoid responsibility within the relationship. Current participants described various instances in which their former

spouses attempted to evade responsibilities. The avoidance of accountability and responsibility, often a byproduct of emotional immaturity, contributed to ongoing patterns of maladaptive interactions within the marriage. These interactions are further explored in another theme.

Marked difficulties with emotional regulation were evident, contributing significantly to heightened emotional reactivity. Effective emotion regulation requires individuals to accurately perceive their emotions and cultivate emotional intelligence (Adıyaman & Eğinli, 2023; van Kleef & Côté, 2022). Many of the current participants expressed how their spouses exhibited difficulty accurately perceiving their emotions, which is an issue rooted in emotional immaturity. This lack of emotional awareness often resulted in poor emotional regulation, which heightened relational tension and contributed to marital conflict (see Jacoby et al., 2017). Furthermore, although Jacoby et al. (2017) identified poor emotional regulation as a contributing factor to negative communication patterns, Adıyaman and Eğinli (2023) emphasized that developing emotional regulation skills can enhance individuals' capacity for effective conflict resolution. Additionally, current participants described their spouses as lacking emotional regulation, often struggling to perceive or understand their own emotions. This emotional turmoil contributed to the reliance on defense mechanisms and heightened emotional reactivity.

Although not always expressed explicitly, participants consistently described experiences of emotional disconnection within their prior marriage. Emotional disconnection, as a related category to emotional immaturity, is a strong indicator of poor

differentiation of self (Ghanbarian et al., 2020). In essence, it reflects a lack of emotional intelligence. Notably, individuals with low differentiation of self who experience emotional disconnection may be more inclined to disengage from the relationship (Norona & Welsh, 2016). This was evident, as participants described becoming increasingly apathetic toward their spouse's behavior. For several participants, this emotional disconnection ultimately contributed to their decision to end the relationship. Subsequently, emotional immaturity often results in poor emotional regulation and fosters maladaptive behaviors (Jacoby et al., 2017), which ultimately contribute to emotional disconnection (Norona & Welsh, 2016). It appears to serve as an underlying foundation for the development of defense mechanisms, which ultimately contributes to ongoing relational difficulties.

Theme 2: Defense Mechanisms

The concept of defense mechanisms was first introduced by Sigmund Freud and was later explored and expanded by his daughter, Anna Freud (Freud, 1936). Freud (1936) described defense mechanisms as unconscious psychological strategies to manage internal conflicts. They serve to protect the individual from distressing emotions such as anxiety or guilt. Hubristic pride is classified as a self-conscious emotion (Castonguay et al., 2015; Dickens & Robins, 2022; Tangney & Fischer, 1995; Tracy & Robins, 2007a). According to Dickens and Robins (2022), individuals may employ hubristic pride as a compensatory strategy to mask underlying insecurities and to project a false sense of confidence. Research on emotional immaturity suggests that individuals with limited capacity for emotion regulation often struggle to manage distressing affective states

(Gibson, 2015). As a result, they may experience heightened vulnerability and subsequently adopt hubristic pride as a defensive posture to conceal emotional fragility.

The findings of this study are consistent with prior research on defense mechanisms. Defense mechanisms are used to conceal vulnerability, insecurities, and challenging emotions such as shame (Demirbilek et al., 2022; Thamboo, 2022; Tracy et al., 2009; Whiting & Cravens, 2016). Whiting and Cravens (2016) assert that individuals employ defense mechanisms as a form of self-preservation, particularly when they lack the skills to effectively regulate their emotions. These mechanisms serve to obscure or suppress emotional responses that may feel overwhelming or unmanageable. Hubristic pride appears to function as a defense mechanism, serving to conceal underlying emotional vulnerabilities (Costello et al., 2018)

Defense mechanisms are utilized in various forms, often operating outside of individuals' conscious awareness (Whiting & Cravens, 2016). Common manifestations of defense mechanisms include expressions of anger, deceitful behavior, vengefulness, and contempt toward others (Ináncsi et al., 2018). The current findings revealed four distinct categories underlying these expressions: entitlement, manipulation, arrogance and egotism, and a false sense of control. Within the dark triad, there is often a pronounced sense of entitlement, wherein individuals perceive themselves as inherently deserving of whatever they desire (Thamboo, 2022). This pattern was commonly observed in participants' accounts of their spouses. This sense of entitlement may stem from underlying arrogance and elitism, wherein individuals exhibit a perceived superiority that manifests as dismissiveness toward others, often based on judgments related to social

status, education, or personal preferences (Demirbilek et al., 2022; Kleitman et al., 2019). As an emotional construct, entitlement cultivates a perceived sense of superiority, prompting individuals to believe they merit more than is realistically warranted. This inflated self-perception often serves to obscure underlying vulnerabilities and feelings of inadequacy (Demirbilek et al., 2022).

Manipulation emerged as another category of defense mechanisms. Participants described behaviors such as stonewalling, gaslighting, and aggression as manipulative tactics used to exert control or deflect responsibility within the relationship. Stonewalling refers to a partner's withdrawal from conflictual interactions, characterized by emotional disengagement and a refusal to communicate or participate in the exchange (Gottman & Gottman, 2017). Gottman and Gottman extensively discussed stonewalling, identifying it as an indicator of relational distress (2017). Participants recounted experiences of being stonewalled by their spouses, which elicited feelings of frustration and invalidation which are emotional responses that will be explored in the subsequent theme.

Within the domain of manipulative behaviors, gaslighting is identified as a maladaptive communication strategy (Bocar, 2017). Gaslighting is a form of emotional abuse involving repeated manipulation intended to make individuals question their perceptions, judgment, and sense of reality, ultimately undermining their trust in themselves and others. Participants commonly expressed feelings of confusion and invalidation in response to this form of manipulation.

Participants also reported occasional instances of aggressive communication from their spouses. Winer et al. (2024) identify aggressive communication as the least effective

communication style, noting that individuals who engage in it often prioritize their own needs at the expense of the well-being of others. Following instances of aggressive communication, participants appeared feeling confused, overwhelmed, and experiencing anger in response.

Arrogance and egotistical behavior emerged as two predominant defense mechanisms across participants' experiences. Arrogance reflects a perceived sense of superiority over others (Demirbilek et al., 2022; Kleitman et al., 2019), whereas egotism refers to an excessive preoccupation with one's own importance and self-interest (Dolinski et al., 2023). This reflects the emergence of entitlement and the pursuit of control—ultimately an illusory sense of control, given that individuals cannot truly govern the actions or behaviors of others. Arrogant and egotistical behaviors often serve as defenses against feelings of inferiority or vulnerability while simultaneously serving as a means of asserting dominance within the relationship (Cowan et al., 2019). Individuals who exhibit these behaviors often engage in blame-shifting, display disrespect toward others, and seek to gain an advantage over their peers (Demirbilek et al., 2022).

Arrogance and egotism may serve as underlying contributors to manipulative behavior. Given these relational dynamics, it is understandable that participants reported feeling confused, frustrated, invalidated, and emotionally exhausted in response to their spouses' behaviors. These emotional reactions were directly tied to the patterns of interaction they experienced within the relationship.

Finally, a significant illusion of control often arises from entitlement, manipulative behaviors, and defensive mechanisms rooted in hubristic pride. Through

these strategies, the individual attempts to assert control over others and the broader situation. Bocar (2017) highlights that aggressive communication can serve as a manipulative technique aimed at fulfilling the individual's own needs—ultimately fostering a false sense of control, because it disregards and undermines the needs of others. Dickens and Robins (2022) noted that manipulative behaviors and defense mechanisms can foster a false sense of confidence. Other scholars have intellectualized these behaviors as strategies for attaining—or perceiving oneself as attaining—power and prestige within interpersonal relationships (Davis & Vaillancourt, 2023; Muñoz & De Los Reyes, 2023; Thamboo, 2022). Participants did not explicitly identify a perceived sense of control; however, they reported feeling manipulated, which contributed to heightened confusion and anger. This emotional response was further exacerbated by a sustained experience of feeling neither understood nor validated, ultimately leading to a reactive stance characterized by apathy and disengagement.

Theme 3: Emotional Reactivity

Emotional reactivity emerged as the third central theme. Participants commonly reported emotional reactions characterized by feeling overwhelmed and reflecting the cognitive fatigue associated with sustained relational imbalance and distress. They expressed feelings of vulnerability, resentment, and ambivalence in response to their spouses' maladaptive communication patterns. These emotional responses represented the primary categories identified within this theme.

Vulnerability is widely regarded as an adaptive strategy that supports effective communication (Sinha et al., 2021). Vulnerability manifested in two distinct ways: first,

spouses tended to conceal their own vulnerabilities through the use of defense mechanisms (Thamboo, 2022); second, participants' expressions of vulnerability frequently surfaced as emotional responses to their spouses' maladaptive communication patterns. Due to their spouses' emotional immaturity and inability to engage vulnerably, participants were unable to establish genuine emotional connection, despite their own openness (Gordon & Chen, 2016; Sinha et al., 2021). As Whiting and Cravens (2016) suggest, when one partner engages in maladaptive communication, the other may begin to mirror these behaviors.

A recurring trigger was the experience of invalidation—feeling unheard, misunderstood, minimized, or gaslit. Gottman and Driver (2005) emphasized that conflict within communication often leads individuals to experience a sense of being misunderstood. In response to this negative feeling, several participants engaged in reactive self-protective behaviors, which included emotionally charged responses such as yelling, withdrawal, defensiveness, aggression, appeasement, or ambivalence, which are strategies aimed at regaining control, safeguarding the self, or mitigating perceived emotional threat. These strategies reflect principles of Homans's (1958) social exchange theory, wherein individuals seek relational equilibrium by managing perceived rewards and costs. However, their efforts are not always adaptive; maladaptive responses often emerge as attempts to minimize relational costs, sometimes at the expense of overall relational health.

Resentment emerged as another prominent emotional response. As their emotional needs remained unmet and they continued to feel invalidated. Gordon and

Chen (2016) highlighted empathy as a critical component of effective communication, underscoring its role in fostering understanding and relational connection. However, a persistent absence of empathy within relational interactions is associated with decreased relationship satisfaction for many individuals (Gordon & Chen, 2016). The sustained lack of empathy has been linked to participants reporting feelings of resentment or anger toward their spouses (see Bocar, 2017).

The ongoing effort to understand their partner, coupled with repeated experiences of invalidation and unsuccessful attempts to repair the relationship, often culminated in a sense of ambivalence. This emotional stance, though not directly identified in the literature review, was a recurring theme in the current study. van Kleef and Côté (2022) identified appeasement emotions, such as shame, regret, and embarrassment, as relational mechanisms that may either strengthen interpersonal bonds or diminish the likelihood of punitive responses to previous actions. When these emotions fail to elicit relational repair or reinforcement, individuals may begin to experience ambivalence, perceiving limited options for restoring connection. This dynamic reflects the underlying principles of the rewards and costs framework, wherein emotional expression and behavior are employed either to enhance relational outcomes or to minimize perceived consequences. Elevated emotional arousal in an individual tends to reduce empathic capacity while simultaneously increasing defensive responses (Fischer et al., 2019; Shuper Engelhard, 2019). For many participants, the intensity of their emotional arousal became overwhelming, leading them to adopt ambivalence as a means of managing their emotional state. This is perceived as the most accessible and least costly coping strategy

available. Ultimately, ambivalence appeared to function as a defense mechanism, enabling participants to distance themselves emotionally and shield against the ongoing relational distress caused by their spouses' behaviors.

Theme 4: Unhealthy Interactions

As a result of emotional reactivity, unhealthy interactions presented themselves more often throughout the marriage. The primary categories identified for unhealthy interactions are conflict escalation, power imbalance, emotional neglect, and coping fatigue. Conflict escalation was characterized by recurring patterns such as cyclical arguments, avoidance, one-sided communication, and ineffective problem resolution. Hence, relational conflict is frequently rooted in maladaptive communication patterns (Sinha et al., 2021; Weber et al., 2021). These patterns are generally characterized by aggressive and passive-aggressive communication (Winer et al., 2024). As conflict arises, emotional intensity escalates, resulting in heightened physiological arousal and the activation of cognitive distortions (Whiting & Cravens, 2016). Individuals often mirror the emotional expressions of those around them; thus, when one partner exhibits anger, the other is likely to respond with similar emotional intensity, thus escalating the conflict (van Kleef & Côté, 2022). Subsequently, individuals exposed to conflict or negative communication within their relationships are at increased risk for compromised mental health and reduced overall well-being (Gordon & Chen, 2016; Kansky, 2018; Tam et al., 2011).

Participants reported feeling emotionally unsafe within their marriages, partially because of conflict escalation. Although some demonstrated notable fortitude and

perseverance by attempting to sustain the relationship, they ultimately recognized that their well-being was at risk. Consequently, couples with limited conflict resolution skills are at a higher risk of relationship dissolution (Firat & Okanlı, 2019).

Power imbalances emerge when one partner asserts control while evading accountability, often expressed through emotional withdrawal and passive-aggressive behavior. This category aligns well with Homans's (1958) social exchange theory, which underscores the importance of balance in social interactions. As emphasized by Ahmad et al. (2023), the theory highlights the necessity of maintaining equilibrium in relational exchanges. For a partnership to flourish, emotional reciprocation must be mutual and balanced between partners. These unhealthy interactions illustrate how relationships can become one-sided, with participants making efforts to share their perspectives or initiate repair yet receiving little to no reciprocation or mutual respect from their spouses.

Emotional neglect involves the persistent absence of empathy, support, or responsiveness to a partner's emotional needs, resulting in feelings of invisibility, exhaustion, and emotional depletion. Over time, these dynamics contributed to internal ambivalence and relational distancing. Gottman and Levenson (2002) identified insecure attachment styles as being characterized by emotional detachment and neglectful behaviors toward a partner. Regardless of whether a partner exhibits an insecure attachment style, emotional neglect reflects emotional immaturity and constitutes an unhealthy relational pattern (Lee et al., 2023; van Kleef & Côté, 2022). Without emotional intelligence, partners are not able to perceive emotions effectively and are generally unable to support others in navigating their emotional experiences (van Kleef &

Côté, 2022). Such neglect often prompts emotional withdrawal or distancing in the other partner, ultimately leading to ambivalence due to a lack of emotional safety within the relationship.

Coping fatigue reflected the chronic strain of managing the relationship. Participants frequently described over-functioning, emotional self-suppression, and disproportionate efforts to maintain stability. These behaviors were often rooted in people-pleasing tendencies or attempts to regulate the partner's emotional volatility, with boundary-setting frequently met with resistance or negative consequences. This reflects an indirect application of Homans's (1958) social exchange theory, wherein the ongoing effort to maintain relational balance through verbal and nonverbal communication becomes increasingly burdensome. The continuous attempt to regulate and stabilize the relationship can lead to emotional fatigue, prompting individuals to adopt coping strategies in response to the strain.

The ongoing effort by participants to convey their reality and initiate relational repair—only to be met with invalidation, akin to encountering an emotional barrier—ultimately led to feelings of exhaustion and burnout. Coping fatigue was not explicitly identified in the literature review; however, it may function as an indirect defense mechanism that enables individuals to manage overwhelming emotional experiences (Hedgespeth, 2023).

The themes of emotional immaturity, defense mechanisms, emotional reactions, and unhealthy interactions are deeply interconnected. Emotional immaturity often gives rise to feelings of insecurity and vulnerability—emotions that individuals may perceive

as negative and seek to conceal. This concealment frequently occurs through the use of maladaptive defense mechanisms, such as hubristic pride. When these defenses are directed toward a spouse, they can provoke emotional reactivity in both partners, disrupting healthy communication and creating relational imbalance. From the perspective of social exchange theory, this imbalance distorts the perceived distribution of rewards and costs within the relationship, influencing how each partner responds. Ultimately, these dynamics contribute to the emergence of unhealthy interaction patterns, leading to marriage dissolution.

Limitations of the Study

Extensive measures were undertaken to uphold the integrity and coherence of the research process. Nonetheless, the inherent characteristics of qualitative inquiry present certain limitations that may influence the interpretation and scope of the findings. For instance, this study explored how hubristic pride affects communicative dynamics among divorced individuals. The findings are inherently context-specific and not intended for broad generalization across diverse populations or relationship types. Insights are drawn specifically from the lived experiences of the selected participants.

The participant sample may not reflect the full diversity of participants' experiences. Factors such as socioeconomic status, cultural background, and relational context were not evenly represented, which may influence how emotional disengagement manifests across broader populations. The participant sample consisted predominantly of individuals identifying as White, with one individual of mixed heritage (half-Korean) who was raised within a culturally White household in the United States.

The gender distribution was markedly skewed, with only one male participant included. This demographic imbalance limits the representativeness of male perspectives on relational dynamics, which may differ significantly from those of female participants. Furthermore, participants' self-reports may have been influenced by recall bias or relational sensitivities. Although efforts were made to create a safe and open interview environment, some emotional nuances may have remained unexpressed.

Given the interpretive nature of qualitative research, my background, assumptions, and theoretical lens may have influenced the coding and thematic development. Reflexivity practices were employed to monitor and mitigate bias throughout the analytic process. However, to ensure credibility and reliability, the application of multiple methodological strategies was used, including triangulation, member checking, audit trail documentation, thick description, and peer debriefing throughout the research process.

As part of my triangulation strategy, I documented nonverbal cues and emotional tone through memos during each interview. I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the data collection process to capture insights, and I conducted comparative analysis across participant responses by attending to variations in age and experiential background. To enhance credibility through member-checking, I developed a summary of each participant's interview and shared it with them for review. Participants were invited to provide feedback regarding the accuracy and alignment of the summary with their own perceptions and experiences. In addition to member checking, I employed analytic memos, reflexive journaling, and detailed documentation of coding decisions to establish

a comprehensive audit trail. Throughout the writing process, I aimed to incorporate thick description to convey the depth and complexity of participants' experiences, enabling readers to engage meaningfully with the contextual and emotional nuances of the data. Lastly, I engaged in peer debriefing obtaining critical reviews and feedback from committee members to ensure clarity, coherence, and credibility of the research process and findings.

Recommendations

This basic qualitative study explored how hubristic pride influences communicative processes within marital relationships from the perspective of divorced individuals. Analysis of participant experiences yielded four core themes. Future research may benefit from examining the interrelationship among the identified themes to further understand their sequential and/or reciprocal effects.

Expanding future research to include culturally comparative studies and participants from diverse cultural backgrounds would enhance the contextual richness and applicability of findings. Additionally, while this study included one same-sex female relationship, further exploration of communicative dynamics within same-sex male partnerships could offer valuable insights and deepen understanding of relational patterns across varied marital contexts. Moreover, extending research to include long-term partnered or dating relationships may provide additional insight into the manifestations of hubristic pride and emotional disengagement outside the context of marriage. Such exploration could deepen understanding of these dynamics across varied relational structures.

The gender imbalance within this study resulted in a predominantly female perspective, potentially limiting the representation of male experiences. The differing relational viewpoints expressed by the sole male participant suggest meaningful distinctions in how men and women perceive and navigate their relationships. Future research incorporating a more balanced gender sample, particularly focused on male perspectives within the same conceptual framework, may yield valuable comparative insights.

Further exploration into the development of an emotional disengagement model appears warranted. Preliminary findings indicate a pattern of communicative decline within participants' relational dynamics, particularly in response to hubristic or pride-driven behaviors. This deterioration may reflect a progressive sequence of emotional and behavioral responses, including confusion, assertion or attempted repair, invalidation, frustration, emotional fatigue, and apathy. These stages may illustrate a trajectory of emotional disengagement, ultimately leading to marital dissolution. The following discussion provides an outline to guide future research into developing such a model. The proposed model and stages are based on the participant's responses, as well as the themes that emerged from this study.

Model of Emotional Disengagement

The first stage, confusion, emerges when one partner begins to employ defense mechanisms toward the other. The receiving partner often experiences a sense of bafflement, struggling to understand the underlying reasons for the behavior. This lack of clarity creates uncertainty and leaves the partner unsure of what is occurring in the

moment. The second stage, which consists of two interconnected components, sharing perspective and attempting repair, involves the partner's effort to either articulate their experience or improve the situation. During this stage, the individual seeks to express their thoughts and emotions or engage in behaviors aimed at restoring relational harmony. This stage reflects the dynamics of the rewards and costs framework, as the partner evaluates what actions are necessary to achieve emotional reciprocity and what personal or relational costs may be incurred in the process. The third stage, not feeling validated, occurs when a partner's attempt to share their perspective or initiate repair is met with dismissal, denial, or minimization by their spouse. As a result, the partner's efforts are rendered ineffective, leading to a profound sense of invalidation. The fourth stage, frustration, is marked by the partner's growing feelings of anger, helplessness, and emotional overwhelm due to repeated experiences of not being heard or understood by their spouse. At this point, the partner begins to reassess the relational dynamics through the lens of rewards and costs, weighing the potential outcomes of continued engagement. They may choose to return to stage two, sharing their perspective or attempting repair, or opt to disengage. Over time, this cyclical pattern of effort and rejection contributes to emotional exhaustion which corresponds to stage four—feeling worn down. This stage reflects the partner's emotional fatigue resulting from the ongoing cycle of attempting to sustain the relationship. The repeated efforts to repair and preserve the connection leads to feelings of depletion, burnout, and exhaustion. The final stage of the model is apathy, characterized by emotional disengagement. At this point, the partner feels emotionally

depleted and no longer has the capacity or desire to invest in reconnecting with their spouse.

Implications

An enhanced understanding of this study may contribute to improved relational health, particularly within families. It may also promote emotionally transparent dialogue, thereby reducing familial tension and fostering greater resilience within family systems. Additionally, these findings can support counselors, therapists, and educators in identifying communicative warning signs and applying interventions rooted in emotional literacy. The themes may also guide curriculum development in relationship education or conflict resolution programs. More broadly, the findings of this study suggest that continued research in this area may contribute meaningfully to the development of community mental health initiatives and family support programs, particularly when extended to diverse cultural and relational populations.

This study employed a basic qualitative methodology to investigate nuanced relational phenomena, utilizing inquiries to explore in depth interpersonal constructs. The emerging findings indicate that relational communication tends to operate within a transactional framework, consistent with Homans's social exchange theory. Emotional immaturity appears to influence communicative patterns, often activating defense mechanisms that contribute to reactive emotional responses and maladaptive interpersonal dynamics. In this context, hubristic pride may further distort communication by reinforcing rigid self-perceptions and limiting empathic engagement. These insights pave the way for future empirical investigations into the roles of pride and

communicative deterioration across diverse cultural and gender contexts. Moreover, integration of these findings into relational assessments and psychoeducational interventions is recommended, as it may facilitate the identification of pride-based defensiveness within client narratives.

Conclusion

This basic qualitative study explored how divorced individuals experienced the influence of hubristic pride on communication within their former marriages, focusing on emotional, verbal, and nonverbal exchanges. By addressing a gap in the literature, the research aimed to support counseling professionals and promote healthier relational dynamics, with broader implications for strengthening families and social systems. Participant experiences in this study affirmed that hubristic pride influences relational communication, possibly through the mechanism of emotional disengagement.

The central outcome of this research was the identification of emotional immaturity as a foundational factor driving the activation of defense mechanisms, which in turn contributed to heightened emotional reactivity and unhealthy interactions within the marital context. The thematic analysis illuminated participants' perceptions of spousal communication, particularly in relation to pride-driven defenses that shaped the emotional tone and quality of their interactions. The progression of unhealthy interactions ultimately contributed to the dissolution of the marital relationship.

Existing literature underscored emotional immaturity, defense mechanisms, and some elements of emotional reactivity, providing a strong foundation for the thematic findings of this study. However, research within this study is limited in unhealthy

interactions specifically within the context of communication. This study bridges that gap by elucidating the impact of hubristic pride on interpersonal communication, through which individuals can recognize and interpret deteriorating communication within their relationships.

A deeper understanding of emotional immaturity, defense mechanisms, and their influence on emotional reactivity and unhealthy interactions may yield valuable insights into fostering emotional awareness and enhancing the quality of interpersonal communication. When applied within family systems, it has the potential to reduce interpersonal tension and strengthen relational bonds. For practitioners and educators, this understanding may assist in identifying early communicative warning signs and guiding individuals toward enhanced emotional intelligence. It holds promise for informing community mental health initiatives and family support interventions. Within the broader context of social exchange theory, exploring the relationship between defense mechanisms and emotional reactivity offers a meaningful contribution to therapeutic assessment and psychoeducational programming. Integrating these themes into clinical practice provides a valuable pathway for enhancing emotional processing and relational insight. Furthermore, these illuminating findings offer a foundational framework for cultivating deeper self-awareness, fostering more compassionate engagement, and supporting the development of stronger, more resilient family systems.

References

- Aguirre, E. (2019). Do changes in divorce legislation have an impact on divorce rates? The case of unilateral divorce in Mexico. *Latin American Economic Review*, 28(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40503-019-0071-7>
- Ahmad, R., Nawaz, M. R., Ishaq, M. I., Khan, M. M., & Ashraf, H. A. (2023). Social exchange theory: Systematic review and future directions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1015921. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1015921>
- Akyol, B., & Evren, H. U. (2022). An examination of the relationship between managerial arrogance and presenteeism (A state university example). *Gazi University Journal of Gazi Educational Faculty (GUJGEF)*, 42(2), 1303-1336. <https://doi.org/10.17152/gefad.1126545>
- Al-Ababneh, M. M. (2020). Linking ontology, epistemology, and research methodology. *Science & Philosophy*, 8(1), 75-91.
- Ali, F., & Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (2010). The dark side of love and life satisfaction: Associations with intimate relationships, psychopathy and Machiavellianism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 48(2), 228-233. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2009.10.016>
- Altgelt, E. E., Reyes, M. A., French, J. E., Meltzer, A. L., & McNulty, J. K. (2018). Who is sexually faithful? Own and partner personality traits as predictors of infidelity. *Journal of Social Personal Relationships*, 35(4), 600-614. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407517743085>
- American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language. (n.d.). *Stuck-up*.

<https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=stuck-up>

- American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596>
- Ansaripur, S., Sohrabi, R., & Khakbaz, A. S. (2020). Consumers' arrogance: Understanding semantic perceptions using phenomenology. *Business Management, 12*(2), 436-454. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jibm.2020.280645.3514>
- Arlow, J. A. (1957). On smugness. *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 38*(1), 1.
- Auersperg, F., Vlasak, T., Ponocny, I., & Barth, A. (2019). Long-term effects of parental divorce on mental health – A meta-analysis. *Journal of Psychiatric Research, 119*, 107-115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychires.2019.09.011>
- Bailey, L. F. (2014). The origin and success of qualitative research. *International Journal of Market Research, 56*(2), 167-184. <https://doi.org/10.2501/IJMR-2014-013>
- Barkhuizen, G. (2014). Number of participants. *Language Teaching Research, 18*(1), 5-7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168813510447>
- Batson, C. D. (2022). Prosocial motivation: A Lewinian approach. *Motivation Science, 8*(1), 110. <https://doi.org/10.1037/mot0000217>
- Birchler, G. R. (1979). Communication skills in married couples. *Research and Practice in Social Skills Training, 273-315*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-2192-5_8
- Bland, A. M., & McQueen, K. S. (2021). Unemployment and marital quality in great recession America: An exploratory canonical correlation analysis. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 61*(4), 516-545.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167818779964https://doi.org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/0022167818779964>

Bocar, A. C. (2017). Aggressive, passive, and assertive: Which communication style is commonly used by college students? *SSRN Electronic Journal*.

<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2956807>

Bocian, K., & Wojciszke, B. (2014). Self-interest bias in moral judgments of others' actions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 40(7), 898-909.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167214529800>

Bolló, H., Bóthe, B., Tóth-Király, I., & Orosz, G. (2018). Pride and social status.

Frontiers in Psychology, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01979>

Borden, L., Levy, P. E., & Silverman, S. B. (2018). Leader arrogance and subordinate outcomes: The role of feedback processes. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 33(3), 345-364. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-017-9501-1>

Bowlby, J. (1984). *Attachment: Attachment and loss* (Vol. 1). Penguin Books. (Original work published 1969).

Boyd, R. L., & Robinson, M. D. (2015). Not sugar and spice and everything nice: Name-letter preferences as a predictor of daily hostile behavior. *Self and Identity*, 14(2), 147-156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2014.965731>

Bradley, R. P. C., Drummey, K., Gottman, J. M., & Gottman, J. S. (2014). Treating couples who mutually exhibit violence or aggression: Reducing behaviors that show a susceptibility for violence. *Journal of Family Violence*, 29(5), 549-558.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-014-9615-4>

- Brewer, G., Parkinson, M., Pickles, A., Anson, J., & Mulinder, G. (2023). Dark Triad traits and relationship dissolution. *Personality and Individual Differences, 204*, 112045. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2022.112045>
- Encyclopedia Britannica. (2023, October 23). Social status. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-status>
- Brodsky, S. L. (2004). Smug and they don't know it. In *Coping with cross-examination and other pathways to effective testimony*, 68-71. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10748-014>
- Brown, B. (2006). Shame Resilience Theory: A grounded theory study on women and shame. *Families in Society, 87*(1), 43-52. <https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.3483>
- Brown, S. M., Rhoades, G. K., Pluess, M., Allen, E. S., & Stanley, S. M. (2024). Genetic and subjective sensitivity, relationship dynamics, and psychological distress in couples. *Journal of Family Psychology, 38*(5), 743-750. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0001229>
- Burgoon, J. K., Blair, J. P., & Strom, R. E. (2008). Cognitive biases and nonverbal cue availability in detecting deception. *Human Communication Research, 34*(4), 572-599. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2008.00333.x>
- Burgoon, J. K., Manusov, V., & Guerrero, L. K. (2021). *Nonverbal communication* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003095552>
- Cambridge University Press & Assessment. (2024). *Stuck up*. In *Cambridge Dictionary*. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stuck-up>
- Carmichael, C. L., & Mizrahi, M. (2023). Connecting cues: The role of nonverbal cues in

perceived responsiveness. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 53, 101663.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101663>

Carrera, P., Oceja, L., Caballero, A., Muñoz, D., López-Pérez, B., & Ambrona, T. (2013).

I feel so sorry! Tapping the joint influence of empathy and personal distress on helping behavior. *Motivation and Emotion*, 37(2), 335-345.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-012-9302-9>

Carter, Z. A. (2018). Emotional and sexual Facebook communication habits of married

men with the opposite sex: The damaging marital effects of Facebook

cyberinfidelity. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 37(2), 153-165.

Carver, C. S., Sinclair, S., & Johnson, S. L. (2010). Authentic and hubristic pride:

Differential relations to aspects of goal regulation, affect, and self-control.

Journal of Research in Personality, 44(6), 698-703.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2010.09.004>

Castonguay, A. L., Pila, E., Wrosch, C., & Sabiston, C. M. (2015). Body-related self-

conscious emotions relate to physical activity motivation and behavior in men.

American Journal of Men's Health, 9(3), 209-221.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988314537517>

Catto, G. (2005). Professionalism pompous, pretentious and outmoded? *Journal of*

Interprofessional Care, 19(4), 313-314.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13561820500215061>

Adiyaman, Y. C., & Eğinli, A. T. (2023). The effect of early maladaptive schemas on

communication styles of romantic couples. *Journal of Fundamentals of Mental*

Health, 25(6), 353-362.

Center for Family & Human Rights. (n.d.). The Family Articles: Official Civil Society Platform. <https://civilsocietyforthefamily.org/wp-content/uploads/THE-FAMILY-ARTICLES-2.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). *FASTSTATS - Marriage and Divorce*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/marriage-divorce.htm>

Chang, C. (2014). Guilt regulation: The relative effects of altruistic versus egoistic appeals for charity advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 43(3), 211-227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2013.853632>

Cheng, J. T., Tracy, J. L., Foulsham, T., Kingstone, A., & Henrich, J. (2013). Two ways to the top: Evidence that dominance and prestige are distinct yet viable avenues to social rank and influence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104(1), 103-125. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030398>

Christensen, A., & Shenk, J. L. (1991). Communication, conflict, and psychological distance in nondistressed, clinic, and divorcing couples. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 59(3), 458-463. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.59.3.458>

Clark, A. N. (2023). Using social exchange theory to examine relationship processes in asexual-allosexual couples. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 15(2), 352-372. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12495>

Clemente, M., & Espinosa, P. (2021). Revenge in couple relationships and their relation

- to the dark triad. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(14), 7653. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18147653>
- Cohen, P. N. (2019). The coming divorce decline. *Socius: Sociological research for a dynamic world*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023119873497>
- Costello, T. H., Unterberger, A., Watts, A. L., & Lilienfeld, S. O. (2018). Psychopathy and pride: Testing Lykken's hypothesis regarding the implications of fearlessness for prosocial and antisocial behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00185>
- Cowan, N., Adams, E. J., Bhangal, S., Corcoran, M., Decker, R., Dockter, C. E., Eubank, T., Gann, C. L., Greene, N. R., Helle, A. C., Lee, N., Nguyen, A. T., Ripley, K. R., Scofield, J. E., Tapia, M. A., Threlkeld, K. L., & Watts, A. L. (2019). Foundations of arrogance: A broad survey and framework for research. *Review of General Psychology*, 23(4), 425-443. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1089268019877138>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of management*, 31(6), 874-900. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206305279602>
- Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E. L., Daniels, S. R., & Hall, A. V. (2017). Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies. *Academy of management annals*, 11(1), 479-516. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2015.0099>
- Darwin, C. (1916). *The expression of the emotions in man and animals* / by Charles

Darwin. <https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.title.4820>

Daundasekara, S. S., Schuler, B. R., Beauchamp, J. E. S., & Hernandez, D. C. (2021).

The mediating effect of parenting stress and couple relationship quality on the association between material hardship trajectories and maternal mental health status. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 290, 31-39.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2021.04.058>

Davis, A. C., & Vaillancourt, T. (2023). Predicting dominance and prestige status-

striving from the dark tetrad: The mediating role of indirect aggression. *Current Psychology*, 42(16), 13680-13692. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-02492-y>

Day, N. J. S., Townsend, M. L., & Grenyer, B. F. S. (2022). Correction to: Living with

pathological narcissism: a qualitative study. *Borderline Personality Disorder and Emotion Dysregulation*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40479-022-00177-x>

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40479-022-00177-x>

DeGroot, T., & Gooty, J. (2009). Can nonverbal cues be used to make meaningful

personality attributions in employment interviews? *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 24(2), 179-192. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-009-9098-0>

DeGroot, T., & Motowidlo, S. J. (1999). Why visual and vocal interview cues can affect

interviewers' judgments and predict job performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(6), 986-993. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.84.6.986>

Demir, C. (2019). The needless complexity in academic writing: Simplicity vs. flowery

language. *Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*, 19(2), 13-27.

<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1230906>

- Demirbilek, M., Keser, S., & Akpolat, T. (2022). An evaluation of arrogance orientations of academicians in higher education according to student and alumni opinions. *Higher Education Studies*, 12(1), 84-95. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v12n1p84>
- Demos, E. V. (2019). *The affect theory of Silvan Tomkins for psychoanalysis and psychotherapy: Recasting the essentials*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203835913>
- De Netto, P. M., Quek, K. F., & Golden, K. J. (2021). Communication, the heart of a relationship: Examining capitalization, accommodation, and self-construal on relationship satisfaction. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.767908>
- de Vries, R., & Reeves, A. (2022). What does it mean to be a cultural omnivore? Conflicting visions of omnivorosity in empirical research. *Sociological Research Online*, 27(2), 292-312. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13607804211006109>
- Dickens, L. R., & Robins, R. W. (2022). Pride: A meta-analytic project. *Emotion*, 22(5), 1071-1087. <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000905>
- Di Pierro, R., Fanti, E., Gallucci, M., Madeddu, F., & Preti, E. (2023). Narcissus going public: Pathological narcissism and reactions to public vs private exposure in ego-relevant events. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 45(1), 136-149. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10862-022-09998-0>
- Dolinski, D., Grzyb, T., & Kulesza, W. (2023). Egotistic trap as a social influence technique. *Social Influence*, 18(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15534510.2023.2204245>

- Eckland, N. S., Leyro, T. M., Mendes, W. B., & Thompson, R. J. (2019). The role of physiology and voice in emotion perception during social stress. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, 43(4), 493-511. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10919-019-00311-4>
- Edler, G. (1994). Pompous miniuniversity. *European Education*, 26(4), 49-50. <https://doi.org/10.2753/eue1056-4934260449>
- Emerson, R. M. (1976). Social exchange theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2(1), 335-362. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.02.080176.002003>
- Falconier, M. K., & Jackson, J. B. (2020). Economic strain and couple relationship functioning: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 27(4), 311-325. <https://doi.org/10.1037/str0000157>
- Fan, Q., Wang, X., & Liu, Y. (2023). Can Machiavellianism not be prosocial? Roles of empathy and death anxiety. *Psychological Reports*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00332941231169665>
- Feinberg, J. (2007). *Psychological egoism*. In R. Shafer-Landau (Ed.), *Ethical theory: An anthology* (pp. 167-177). Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing.
- Firat, M., & Okanlı, A. (2019). Assessing the relationship between marital satisfaction and conflict communication styles of married Turkish women. *Current Psychology*, 38(5), 1360-1367. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-017-9688-3>
- Fischer, M. S., Baucom, B. R., Baucom, D. H., Sheng, E., Atkins, D. C., & Hahlweg, K. (2019). When the “U” is not inverted: Trajectories of expressed emotional arousal predict relationship satisfaction. *Family Process*, 58(2), 463-477. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12406>

- Flleva, I. (2021). *How people become pretentious*. Psychology Today.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/the-philosophers-diaries/202106/how-people-become-pretentious>
- Floyd, K., Debrot, A., Horan, S. M., Hesse, C., & Woo, N. T. (2023). Affectionate communication, health, and relationships. *Personal Relationships*, 30(1), 44-75.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/per.12444>
- Floyd, K., & Morman, M. T. (1998). The measurement of affectionate communication. *Communication Quarterly*, 46, 144-162. <https://doi:10.1080/01463379809370092>
- Fox, E. C. (2024). *Relationship basics: Development and pilot evaluation of a novel relationship education program for adult couples* [ProQuest Information & Learning]. In *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences of Engineering* (Vol. 85, Issue 4-B).
- Freud, A. (1936). *The ego and the mechanisms of defence* (C. Baines, Trans.). International Universities Press. (Original work published in German)
- Gantt, E. E., & Williams, R. N. (2021). Psychology and the legacy of Hobbesianism: Egoism, motivation, and the death of meaning. *Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 42(1), 53-72.
- Gerard, H. B. (1954). The anchorage of opinions in face-to-face groups. *Human Relations*, 7(3), 313-325. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872675400700303>
- Ghanbarian, E., Hajhosseini, M., Mikani, M., & Mahmoudpour, A. (2020). Differentiation of self and mate retention behaviors: The mediating role of communication patterns. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 18(4).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1474704920972051>

- Gibson, L. C. (2015). *Adult children of emotionally immature parents: How to heal from distant, rejecting, or self-involved parents*. New Harbinger Publications.
- Gordon, B. G. (2020). Vulnerability in research: Basic ethical concepts and general approach to review. *Ochsner Journal*, 20(1), 34-38.
<https://doi.org/10.31486/toj.19.0079>
- Gordon, A. M., & Chen, S. (2016). Do you get where I'm coming from?: Perceived understanding buffers against the negative impact of conflict on relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 110(2), 239-260.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000039>
- Gottman, J. M., Coan, J., Carrere, S., & Swanson, C. (1998). Predicting marital happiness and stability from newlywed interactions. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60(1), 5-22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/353438>
- Gottman, J. M., & Driver, J. L. (2005). Dysfunctional marital conflict and everyday marital interaction. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 43(3-4), 63-77.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J087v43n03_04
- Gottman, J. M., & Gottman, J. S. (2017). The natural principles of love. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 9(1), 7-26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12182>
- Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (1999). What predicts change in marital interaction over time? A study of alternative models. *Family Process*, 38(2), 143-158.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.1999.00143.x>
- Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (2002). A two-factor model for predicting when a

- couple will divorce: Exploratory analyses using 14-year longitudinal data. *Family Process*, 41(1), 83-96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2002.40102000083.x>
- Gravningen, K., Mitchell, K. R., Wellings, K., Johnson, A. M., Geary, R., Jones, K. G., Clifton, S., Erens, B., Lu, M., Chayachinda, C., Field, N., Sonnenberg, P., & Mercer, C. H. (2017). Reported reasons for breakdown of marriage and cohabitation in Britain: Findings from the third National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Natsal-3). *PloS One*, 12(3), e0174129. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0174129>
- Guevara Beltran, D., Shiota, M. N., & Aktipis, A. (2024). A Socio-functional perspective on emotion and cooperation. *The Oxford Handbook of Evolution and the Emotions*, 622-647. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197544754.013.34>
- Gündoğmuş, A. G., Bulut, S. D., Koçyiğit, Y., Şafak, Y., & Haksar, L. W. (2023). The relationships between intimate partner violence and attachment, personality features, and early maladaptive schemas. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 26(2), 91-103. <https://doi.org/10.5505/kpd.2023.9370>
- Hall, J. A., Horgan, T. G., & Murphy, N. A. (2019). Nonverbal communication. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 70(1), 271-294. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-103145>
- Han, M. S., Hampson, D. P., & Wang, Y. (2022). Two facets of pride and knowledge hiding: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 26(10), 2602-2617. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-06-2021-0488>
- Harper, D. (2020, August 27). Pompous (adj.). *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

<https://www.etymonline.com/word/pompous#:~:text=pompous%20%28adj.%29%20late%2014c.%2C%20%22characterized%20by%20exaggerated%20self-importance,%22stately%2C%20pompous%2C%22%20from%20Latin%20pompa%20%22pomp%22%20%28see%20pomp%29>

Hedgespeth, J. (2023). Defense mechanisms. *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health*.

Heidari, H., & Kimiaei, S. A., Khooinzhad, G., & Mashhadi, A. (2019). Discovering the factors affecting divorce in early marriages: A systematic qualitative study.

Behavioral Sciences Research, 17(2), 314-323.

<https://doi.org/10.52547/rbs.17.2.314>

Hemesath, C. W. (2016). Falling out of romantic love: A phenomenological study of the

meaning of love in marriage. https://iowa-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/searchvid=01IASU&search_scope=ComboPrimocentral&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US&offset=0&query=any,contains,Falling%20out%20of%20romantic%20love:%20A%20phenomenologicalstudy%20of%20the%20meaning%20of%20love%20in%20marriage

Hesse, C., & Tian, X. (2020). Affection deprivation in marital relationships: An actor-partner interdependence mediation analysis. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*,

37(3), 965-985. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407519883697>

Hiew, D. N., Halford, W. K., van de Vijver, F. J. R., & Liu, S. (2016). Communication and relationship satisfaction in Chinese, Western, and intercultural Chinese-Western couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(2), 193-202.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000144>

- Hill, E. J., Allsop, D. B., LeBaron, A. B., & Bean, R. A. (2017). How do money, sex, and stress influence marital instability? *Journal of Financial Therapy*, 8(1).
<https://doi.org/10.4148/1944-9771.1135>
- Ho, S.-Y., Tong, E. M. W., & Jia, L. (2016). Authentic and hubristic pride: Differential effects on delay of gratification. *Emotion*, 16(8), 1147-1156.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000179>
- Holbrook, C., Piazza, J., & Fessler, D. M. T. (2014). Conceptual and empirical challenges to the “authentic” versus “hubristic” model of pride. *Emotion*, 14(1), 17-32.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031711>
- Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology*, 63(6), 597-606. <https://doi.org/10.1086/222355>
- Hooper, A., Spann, C., McCray, T., & Kimberly, C. (2017). Revisiting the basics: Understanding potential demographic differences with John Gottman’s Four Horsemen and emotional flooding. *The Family Journal*, 25(3), 224-229.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480717710650>
- Horney, K. (1950). *Neurosis and human growth: The struggle toward self-realization*. W. W. Norton.
- Hughes, J. L., Camden, A. A., Yangchen, T., Smith, G. P., Domenech Rodríguez, M. M., Rouse, S. V., McDonald, C. P., & Lopez, S. (2022). Invited editorial: Guidance for researchers when using inclusive demographic questions for surveys: Improved and updated questions. *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research*, 27(4), 232-255. <https://doi.org/10.24839/2325-7342.jn27.4.232>

- Ináncsi, T., Pilinszki, A., Paál, T., & Láng, A. (2018). Perceptions of close relationship through the Machiavellians' dark glasses: Negativity, distrust, self-protection against risk and dissatisfaction. *Europe's Journal of Psychology, 14*(4), 806-830. <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v14i4.1550>
- Jacoby, V. M., Krackow, E., & Scotti, J. R. (2017). Betrayal trauma in youth and negative communication during a stressful task: The mediating role of emotion dysregulation. *The International Journal of Aging & Human Development, 84*(3), 247-275. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091415016669724>
- Jarness, V., & Flemmen, M. P. (2019). A struggle on two fronts: boundary drawing in the lower region of the social space and the symbolic market for 'down-to-earthness'. *The British Journal of Sociology, 70*(1), 166-189. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12345>
- Jiménez-Rubio, D., Garoupa, N., & Rosales, V. (2016). Explaining divorce rate determinants: New evidence from Spain. *Applied Economics Letters, 23*(7), 461-464. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504851.2015.1064070>
- Johnson, M. D., Lavner, J. A., Mund, M., Zemp, M., Stanley, S. M., Neyer, F. J., Impett, E. A., Rhoades, G. K., Bodenmann, G., Weidmann, R., Bühler, J. L., Burriss, R. P., Wünsche, J., & Grob, A. (2022). Within-couple associations between communication and relationship satisfaction over time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 48*(4), 534-549. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672211016920>
- Jones, D. N., & Mueller, S. M. (2022). Is Machiavellianism dead or dormant? The perils of researching a secretive construct. *Journal of Business Ethics, 176*(3), 535-549.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04708-w>

Kahn, V. (1993). Revising the history of Machiavellism: English Machiavellism and the doctrine of things indifferent. *Renaissance Quarterly*, 46(3), 526-561.

doi:10.2307/3039104

Kansky, J. (2018). What's love got to do with it? Romantic relationships and well-being.

In E. Diener, S. Oishi, & L. Tay (Eds.), *Handbook of well-being* (pp. 1-24).

Kanter, J. B., Lavner, J. A., Lannin, D. G., Hilgard, J., & Monk, J. K. (2022). Does couple communication predict later relationship quality and dissolution? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage & Family*, 84(2), 533-551.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12804>

Karantzas, G. C., Younan, R., & Pilkington, P. D. (2023). The associations between early maladaptive schemas and adult attachment styles: A meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 30(1), 1-20.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/cps0000108>

Kardum, I., Hudek-Knezevic, J., Mehic, N., & Pilek, M. (2018). The effects of similarity in the dark triad traits on the relationship quality in dating couples. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 131, 38-44. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.04.020>

Katila, J., Hofstetter, E., & Keevallik, L. (2023). Cries of pleasure and pain:

Vocalizations communicating how touch feels in romantic relationships. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 56(4), 330-349.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2023.2272529>

Kensinger, E. A., & Ford, J. H. (2020). Retrieval of emotional events from memory.

Annual review of psychology, 71(1), 251-272. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010419-051123>

Khajehei, M. (2016). Parenting challenges and parents' intimate relationships. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 26(5), 447-451.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2015.1083509>

Kill, C., & Toprakbasti, Z. (2021, May 10). That's cringe: The neuroscience behind embarrassment. *Grey Matters*. <https://greymattersjournal.org/thats-cringe-the-neuroscience-behind-embarassment/>

Kim, M. S. (2014). Doing social constructivist research means making empathic and aesthetic connections with participants. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 22(4), 538-553.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.947835>

Kleitman, S., Hui, J. S.-W., & Jiang, Y. (2019). Confidence to spare: Individual differences in cognitive and metacognitive arrogance and competence. *Metacognition and Learning*, 14(3), 479-508. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11409-019-09210-x>

Kolehmainen, M., & Kinnunen, T. (2019). Touch and affect: Analysing the archive of touch biographies. *Body and Society*, 25(1), 29-56.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034x18817607>

Kong, F., Qiaolin, H., Xiqin, L., Xiayu, C., Xu, W., & Jingjing, Z. (2017). Amplitude of low-frequency fluctuations during resting state differentially predicts authentic and hubristic pride. *Journal of Personality*, 86(2), 213-219.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12306>

Korhonen, M., & Puhakka, M. (2021). The behavior of divorce rates: A smooth transition regression approach. *Journal of Time Series Econometrics*, *13*(1), 1-19.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/jtse-2019-0018>

Kraus, M. W. (2017). Voice-only communication enhances empathic accuracy. *American Psychologist*, *72*(7), 644-654. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000147>

Krettenauer, T., & Casey, V. (2015). Moral identity development and positive moral emotions: Differences involving authentic and hubristic pride. *Identity*, *15*(3), 173-187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2015.1023441>

Kumar, M. (2011, April 12). Difference between egoism and egotism. *Difference Between Similar Terms and Objects*.

<http://www.differencebetween.net/science/nature/difference-between-egoism-and-egotism/>

Kusano, K. (2024). Pride and status: Unpacking two divergent pathways to cooperation [ProQuest Information & Learning]. In *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering* (Vol. 85, Issue 3–B).

Kwon, S., & Weed, N. (2024, May 20). Neuroticism. *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

<https://www.britannica.com/science/neuroticism>

Lanciano, T., & Curci, A. (2021). Psychopathic traits and self-conscious emotions: What is the role of perspective taking ability? *Current Psychology*, *40*(5), 2309-2317.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-0162-2>

Lange, J., & Crusius, J. (2015). The tango of two deadly sins: The social-functional

relation of envy and pride. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 109(3), 453-472. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000026>

Lavner, J. A., Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (2016). Does couples' communication predict marital satisfaction, or does marital satisfaction predict communication? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 78(3), 680-694.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12301>

Lee, H., Woodward-Kron, R., Merry, A., & Weller, J. (2023). Emotions and team communication in the operating room: A scoping review. *Medical Education Online*, 28(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10872981.2023.2194508>

Lenman, J. (2014). Gibbardian humility: Moral fallibility and moral smugness. *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 48(2), 235-245. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10790-014-9420-6>

Liebers, N., & Schramm, H. (2022). Intimacy despite distance: The dark triad and romantic parasocial interactions. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 39(2), 435-456. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075211038051>

Ma-Kellams, C., & Blascovich, J. (2012). Inferring the emotions of friends versus strangers: The role of culture and self-construal. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(7), 933-945. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167212440291>

Maltby, J., Day, L., Giles, D., Gillett, R., Quick, M., Lancaster-James, H., & Linley, P. A. (2008). Implicit theories of a desire for fame. *British Journal of Psychology*, 99(2), 279-292. <https://doi.org/10.1348/000712607x226935>

Markman, H. J., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., Ragan, E. P., & Whitton, S. W. (2010).

The premarital communication roots of marital distress and divorce: The first five years of marriage. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 24(3), 289-298.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019481>

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mercadante, E. J., & Tracy, J. L. (2022). A paradox of pride: Hubristic pride predicts strategic dishonesty in response to status threats. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 151(7), 1681-1706.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0001158.supp>

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Arrogance. In Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/arrogance>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Communication. In Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communication>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Conceited. In Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary.

Retrieved January 15, 2024, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conceited>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Egotistic. In Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/egotistic>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Pompous. In Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pompous>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Smug. In Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/smug>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Snob. In Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/snob>

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Stuck-up. In Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stuck-up>

Microsoft. (2024). Microsoft Copilot [Large language model].

<https://www.microsoft.com>

Mozas-Alonso, M., Oliver, J., & Berástegui, A. (2022). Differentiation of self and its relationship with marital satisfaction and parenting styles in a Spanish sample of adolescents' parents. *PLoS ONE*, *17*(3).

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0265436>

Muñoz, M. E., & De Los Reyes, S. (2023). The dark triad and honesty rules in romantic relationships. *Current Psychology*, *42*(10), 7845-7847.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-02171-y>

Mwansisya, T. E., & Mwampagatwa, I. H. (2023). Consensus on constraints in marital satisfaction among married people in African context. *Journal of Family Issues*, *44*(5), 1237-1253. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X211056939>

Nakonezny, P. A., & Denton, W. H. (2008). Marital relationships: A social exchange theory perspective. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, *36*(5), 402-412.

Neave, L., Tzemou, E., & Fastoso, F. (2020). Seeking attention versus seeking approval: How conspicuous consumption differs between grandiose and vulnerable

narcissists. *Psychology & Marketing*, 37(3), 418-427.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21308>

Neusar, A., & Rubínová, E. (2023). When did this happen? Indicators of accuracy for dating recent and remote personal events. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 12(2), 290-304. <https://doi.org/10.1037/mac0000065.supp>

Noghani, M. E., Gorgidge, F., & Shargh, A. H. (2021). A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative research on divorce factor. *Journal of Research and Health*, 11(3), 139-146. <https://doi.org/10.32598/jrh.11.3.1444.1>

Norona, J. C., & Welsh, D. P. (2016). Rejection sensitivity and relationship satisfaction in dating relationships: The mediating role of differentiation of self. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, 5(2), 124-135.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/cfp0000056>

Noy, A., Taubman-Ben-Ari, O., Morag, I., & Kuint, J. (2020). Intergenerational relations, circumstances, and changes in mothers' marital quality during two years following childbirth. *Health Care for Women International*, 41(1), 101-120.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07399332.2019.1590358>

O'Brien, D., & Ianni, L. (2023). New forms of distinction: How contemporary cultural elites understand 'good' taste. *The Sociological Review*, 71(1), 201-220.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/00380261221128144>

Ogloff, J. R. P. (2006). Psychopathy/antisocial personality disorder conundrum. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 40(6-7), 519-528.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/j.1440-1614.2006.01834.x>

- O'Reilly, C. A., III, & Doerr, B. (2020). Conceit and deceit: Lying, cheating, and stealing among grandiose narcissists. *Personality and Individual Differences, 154*, 109627. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109627>
- Othman, M. H., Johari, K. S. K., & Amat, S. (2021). A systematic literature review on marital challenges in Malaysia. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry, 12*(9), 4012-4022. <https://eds.p.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=1691cc83-22b3-4400-aaf1-f3058c094533%40redis>
- Ouseph, S., & Bance, L. O. (2022). Impact of marital stress and communication quality on marital satisfaction: Basis for proposed couple relationships enhancement program. *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology, 13*(4), 333-339.
- Overall, N. C., Sibley, C. G., & Travaglia, L. K. (2010). Loyal but ignored: The benefits and costs of constructive communication behavior. *Personal Relationships, 17*(1), 127-148. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2010.01257.x>
- Owen, J., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., Markman, H. J., & Allen, E. S. (2019). Treatment-as-usual for couples: Trajectories before and after beginning couple therapy. *Family Process, 58*(2), 273-286. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12390>
- Oxford University Press. (2024). Stuck-up. *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*. <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/stuck-up>
- Pagani, A. F., Parise, M., Donato, S., Gable, S. L., & Schoebi, D. (2020). If you shared my happiness, you are a part of me: Capitalization and the experience of couple identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 46*(2), 258-269.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/01467219854449>

- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Paulhus, D. L., & Williams, K. M. (2002). The dark triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. *Journal of research in personality*, 36(6), 556-563. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0092-6566\(02\)00505-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0092-6566(02)00505-6)
- Pelham, B., Mirenberg, M. C., & Jones, J. T. (2002). Why Susie sells seashells by the seashore: Implicit egotism and major life decisions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(4), 469-487. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.82.4.469>
- Perry, S. L. (2018). Pornography use and marital separation: Evidence from two-wave panel data. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 47(6), 1869-1880. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-017-1080-8>
- Peters, B. J., Reis, H. T., & Gable, S. L. (2018). Making the good even better: A review and theoretical model of interpersonal capitalization. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 12(7), 1. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12407>
- Peterson, R. A. (1992). Understanding audience segmentation: From elite and mass to omnivore and univore. *Poetics*, 21(4), 243-258. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422x\(92\)90008-q](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422x(92)90008-q)
- Peterson, R. A., & Kern, R. M. (1996). Changing highbrow taste: From snob to omnivore. *American Sociological Review*, 61(5), 900-907. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2096460>
- Phutela, D. (2015). The importance of non-verbal communication. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, 9(4), 43-49. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/importance-non->

[verbal-communication/docview/1759007009/se-2](https://www.proquest.com/verbal-communication/docview/1759007009/se-2)

- Pierce, A. (2017). Perceived impact of Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) on marital satisfaction [ProQuest Information & Learning]. In *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering* (Vol. 77, Issue 10–B(E)).
- Poggi, I., & D’Errico, F. (2011). Types of pride and their expression. In A. Esposito, A. Vinciarelli, K. Vicsi, C. Pelachaud, & A. Nijholt (Eds.), *Analysis of verbal and nonverbal communication and enactment: The processing issues* (Vol. 6800, pp. 375-386). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-25775-9_39
- Pompous. (n.d.). *American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition*.(2016). <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/pompous>
- Poole, B. (2007). Is your ‘within’ really necessary? *English Language Teachers Journal*, 61(3), 272-274. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccm036>
- Price, J. P. (2007). Cognitive schemas, defence mechanisms and post-traumatic stress symptomatology. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 80(3), 343-353. <https://doi.org/10.1348/147608306x144178>
- Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2019). *Qualitative research bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological* (3rd ed.). Sage Publication.
- Redhead, D. J., Cheng, J. T., Driver, C., Foulsham, T., & O’Gorman, R. (2019). On the dynamics of social hierarchy: A longitudinal investigation of the rise and fall of prestige, dominance, and social rank in naturalistic task groups. *Evolution and*

Human Behavior, 40(2), 222-234.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2018.12.001>

Rinne, P. (2018). *Kant on love*. de Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110544978>

Robinson, M. D., & Clore, G. L. (2002). Episodic and semantic knowledge in emotional self-report: evidence for two judgment processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83(1), 198-215. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.83.1.198>

Rogoza, R., Kwiatkowska, M. M., Kowalski, C. M., & Ślaski, S. (2018). A brief tale of the two faces of narcissism and the two facets of pride. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 126, 104-108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.01.027>

Rossiter, J. R. (2018). Voice-only does not meaningfully improve detection of emotions: Comment on Kraus (2017). *American Psychologist*, 73(5), 689-690. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000314>

Rotz, D. (2016). Why have divorce rates fallen?: The role of women's age at marriage. *Journal of Human Resources*, 51(4), 961-1002. <https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.51.4.0214-6224r>

Russell, F. (2020). Kantian self-conceit and the two guises of authority. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 50(2), 268-283. <https://doi.org/10.1017/can.2019.15>

Ruvio, A., Bagozzi, R. P., Hult, G. T. M., & Spreng, R. (2020). Consumer arrogance and word-of-mouth. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48(6), 1116-1137. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-020-00725-3>

Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (4th ed.). Sage.

Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and*

Personality, 9(3), 185-211. <https://doi.org/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG>

Schachter, S., & Singer, J. (1962). Cognitive, social, and physiological determinants of emotional state. *Psychological Review*, 69(5), 379-399.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0046234>

Schramm, W. (2001). How communication works. In *Marketing: Critical perspectives on business and management* (1st ed., pp. 357-367). Taylor and Francis Group.

Schriber, R. A., Chung, J. M., Sorensen, K. S., & Robins, R. W. (2017). Dispositional contempt: A first look at the contemptuous person. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 113(2), 280-309. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000101>

Schreiber, L. M., & Valle, B. E. (2013). Social constructivist teaching strategies in the small group classroom. *Small Group Research*, 44(4), 395-411.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496413488422>

Scott, S. B., Rhoades, G. K., & Markman, H. J. (2019). Observed communication and relationship quality in female same-gender couples. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, 8(3), 137-151.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/cfp0000121>

Şenkal Ertürk, İ., Kahya, Y., & Gör, N. (2020). Childhood emotional maltreatment and aggression: The mediator role of the early maladaptive schema domains and difficulties in emotion regulation. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 29(1), 92-110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2018.1541493>

Senyuz, A., & Hasford, J. (2022). The allure of arrogance: How relationship formation motives enhance consumer preferences for arrogant communications. *Journal of*

Business Research, 139, 106-120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusres.2021.09.033>

Septianto, F., Northey, G., Chiew, T. M., & Ngo, L. V. (2020). Hubristic pride & prejudice: The effects of hubristic pride on negative word-of-mouth. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 37(3), 621-643.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2019.11.003>

Shannon, C. E. (1948). A mathematical theory of communication. *The Bell System Technical Journal*, 27(3), 379-423, 623-656. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1538-7305.1948.tb01338.x>

Shuper Engelhard, E. (2019). Embodying the Couple Relationship: Kinesthetic Empathy and Somatic Mirroring in Couples Therapy. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 18(2), 126-147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332691.2018.1481801>

Simon, J. B., Nail, P. R., Swindle, T., Bihm, E. M., & Joshi, K. (2017). Defensive egotism and self-esteem: A cross-cultural examination of the dynamics of bullying in middle school. *Self and Identity*, 16(3), 270-297.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2016.1232660>

Sinha, S., Porter, E. F., Leeper, E. A., & Owen, J. (2021). For worse or for better: Predicting deterioration in a relationship education program for low-income, racially diverse couples. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 20(4), 340-

364. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332691.2020.1867686>

Skinner, B. F. (1965). *Science and human behavior*. Simon and Schuster.

Smith, T. (2021). Schema theory. *Salem Press Encyclopedia*.

Spence, D. (2014). Lost in translation. *BMJ*, 348, g1749.

<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.g1749>

- Stadtlander, L. M. (2015). *Finding your way to a Ph.D.: Advice from the dissertation mentor*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Stanley, S. M., Carlson, R. G., Rhoades, G. K., Markman, H. J., Ritchie, L. L., & Hawkins, A. J. (2020). Best practices in relationship education focused on intimate relationships. *Family Relations*, 69(3), 497-519.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12419>
- Stohr, K. (2023). Smugness as a Kantian vice. In *Virtuous and Vicious Expressions of Partiality*, 164-180. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003393443-12>
- Strayhorn, J. (1978). Social-exchange theory: Cognitive restructuring in marital therapy. *Family Process*, 17(4), 437-448. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.1978.00437.x>
- Subedi, K. R. (2021). Determining the sample in qualitative research. *Scholars' Journal*, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.3126/scholars.v4i1.42457>
- Suchov, R. (2022). Communication behaviors in adult offspring: An analysis of the transmission of marital quality [ProQuest Information & Learning]. In *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering* (Vol. 83, Issue 5–B).
- Tam, C. L., Lee, T. H., Foo, Y. C., & Lim, Y. M. (2011). Communication skills, conflict tactics and mental health: A study of married and cohabitating couples in Malaysia. *Asian social science*, 7(6), 79-87. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v7n6p79>
- Tanesini, A. (2018). Arrogance, anger and debate. *Symposion*, 5(2), 213-227.

<https://doi.org/10.5840/symposion20185217>

Tangney, J. P., & Fischer, K. W. (Eds.). (1995). *Self-conscious emotions: The psychology of shame, guilt, embarrassment, and pride*. Guilford Press.

<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1995-97661-000>

Tavakolizadeh, J., Nejatian, M., & Soori, A. (2015). The effectiveness of communication skills training on marital conflicts and its different aspects in women. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *171*, 214-221.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.112>

Teike, D., & Sneed, K. J. (2018). Building and restoring relationships using the Art of Invitation: An exploratory phenomenological study. *Social Work and Christianity*, *45*(4), 3-21. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2018-57756-001>

Thadathil, A., & Sriram, S. (2020). Divorce, families and adolescents in India: A review of research. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, *61*(1), 1-21.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2019.1586226>

Thamboo, P. A. (2022). An examination of the individual mediating and moderating variables involved in the relationship between the dark triad of personality and emotional manipulation [ProQuest Information & Learning]. In *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering* (Vol. 83, Issue 3–B).

Tong, W., Li, P., Zhou, N., He, Q., Ju, X., Lan, J., Li, X., & Fang, X. (2018). Marriage improves neuroticism in Chinese newlyweds: Communication and marital affect as mediators. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *32*(7), 986991.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000448>

- Totenhagen, C. J., Wilmarth, M. J., Serido, J., & Betancourt, A. E. (2018). Do day-to-day finances play a role in relationship satisfaction? A dyadic investigation. *Journal of Family Psychology, 32*(4), 528-537. <https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1037/fam0000406>
- Tracy, J. L., Cheng, J. T., Robins, R. W., & Trzesniewski, K. H. (2009). Authentic and hubristic pride: The affective core of self-esteem and narcissism. *Self and Identity, 8*(2-3), 196-213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860802505053>
- Tracy, J. L., Mercadante, E., & Hohm, I. (2023). Pride: The emotional foundation of social rank attainment. *Annual Review of Psychology, 74*(1), 519-545. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-032720-040321>
- Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2004a). TARTGET ARTICLE: "Putting the self into self-conscious emotions: A theoretical model." *Psychological Inquiry, 15*(2), 103-125. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1502_01
- Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2004b). Show your pride: Evidence for a discrete emotion expression. *Psychological Science, 15*(3), 194-197. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0956-7976.2004.01503008.x>
- Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2007a). Emerging insights into the nature and function of pride. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 16*(3), 147-150. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2007.00493.x>
- Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2007b). The psychological structure of pride: A tale of two facets. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92*(3), 506-525.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.3.506>

Tracy, J. L., Robins, R. W., & Tangney, J. P. (2008). *The self-conscious emotions: Theory and research*. Guilford. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2007-14002-000>

Van Cappellen, P., Edwards, M. E., & Shiota, M. N. (2023). Shades of expansiveness: Postural expression of dominance, high-arousal positive affect, and warmth. *Emotion, 23*(4), 973-985. <https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0001146>

Van Den Haag, E. (1956). Snobbery. *British Journal of Sociology, 7*(3), 212-216.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/587992>

van Kleef, G. A., & Côté, S. (2022). The Social Effects of Emotions. *Annual Review of Psychology, 73*(1), 629-658. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-020821-010855>

van Osch, Y., Zeelenberg, M., & Breugelmans, S. M. (2018). The self and others in the experience of pride. *Cognition and Emotion, 32*(2), 404-413.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2017.1290586>

van Ruler, B. (2018). Communication theory: An underrated pillar on which strategic communication rests. *International Journal of Strategic Communication, 12*(4), 367-381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2018.1452240>

Veschi, B. (2020). *Etymology of communication. Etymology: Origin of the word.*

<https://etymology.net/communication/>

Waldman, A. (2009, May 1). Field guide to the snob: Some like it haute. *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/200905/field-guide-the-snob-some-it-haute>

- Warren, C. P. W. (1999). The balance of healing: “Pompous pedants, medical monsters and humane healers.” *CMAJ*, *160*(7), 1035-1036.
<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/160/7/1035>
- Weber, D. M., Fischer, M. S., Baucom, D. H., Baucom, B. R. W., Engl, J., Thurmaier, F., Wojda, A. K., & Hahlweg, K. (2021). Escalation and regulation of emotional arousal in couples predicts relationship satisfaction concurrently and 25 years later. *Family Process*, *60*(1), 251-269. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12597>
- Weber, D. M., Lavner, J. A., & Beach, S. R. H. (2023). Couples’ communication quality differs by topic. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *37*(6), 909-919.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0001111>
- Weiss, B., Lavner, J. A., & Miller, J. D. (2018). Self- and partner-reported psychopathic traits’ relations with couples’ communication, marital satisfaction trajectories, and divorce in a longitudinal sample. *Personality Disorders: Theory Research and Treatment*, *9*(3), 239-249. <https://doi.org/10.1037/per0000233>
- Wenlin, M., Yuanjie, L., Tingting, J., Wei, S., Lihua, J., & Li, Z. (2023). Relationship between egocentrism and non-suicidal self-injury in junior high school students. *Journal of Shanghai Jiao Tong University (Medical Science)*, *43*(8), 971.
<https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1674-8115.2023.08.004>
- Whiting, J. B., & Cravens, J. D. (2016). Escalating, accusing, and rationalizing: A model of distortion and interaction in couple conflict. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy*, *15*(4), 251-273.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15332691.2015.1055417>

Wile, D. (1993). *After the fight*. New York: Guilford.

<https://www.guilford.com/books/After-the-Fight/Daniel-Wile/9781572300262>

Williams, M. L. (2012). *Romantic love communication: Examination of equity and effects on relational, sexual, and communication satisfaction* (Doctoral dissertation). Kent State University.

http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=kent1332191567

Williamson, H. C., Ju, X., Bradbury, T. N., Karney, B. R., Fang, X., & Liu, X. (2012). Communication behavior and relationship satisfaction among American and Chinese newlywed couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 26(3), 308-315.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027752>

Williamson, H. C., Nguyen, T. P., Bradbury, T. N., & Karney, B. R. (2016). Are problems that contribute to divorce present at the start of marriage, or do they emerge over time? *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 33(8), 1120-1134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407515617705>

Winer, S., Ramos Salazar, L., Anderson, A. M., & Busch, M. (2024). Resolving conflict in interpersonal relationships using passive, aggressive, and assertive verbal statements. *International Journal of Conflict Management (Emerald)*, 35(2), 334-359. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijcma-03-2023-0048>

Witkower, Z., Mercadante, E., & Tracy, J. L. (2022). The chicken and egg of pride and social rank. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 13(2), 382-389. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506211023619>

Wolcott, H. F. (2005). *The art of fieldwork* (2nd ed.). AltaMira Press.

Wong, R. S. Y. (2023). Psychopathology of antisocial personality disorder: from the structural, functional and biochemical perspectives. *The Egyptian Journal of Neurology, Psychiatry and Neurosurgery*, 59(1), 1-14.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s41983-023-00717-4>

Wordnik. (n.d.). Pompous. In *Wordnik.com*. <https://www.wordnik.com/words/pompous>

Yang, P., & Zhang, Q. (2018). How pride influences product evaluation through construal level. *European Journal of Marketing*, 52(7-8), 1750-1775.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-12-2016-0777>

Yıldız-Önal, Y., & Uçar, S. (2023). Relationship beliefs and communication skills in Turkish married individuals: Examining the mediating role of partner accommodation behavior and emotional dependency. *Journal of Family Issues*, 44(7), 1716-1732. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X211064868>

Yu, Y., Wu, D., Wang, J. M., & Wang, Y. C. (2020). Dark personality, marital quality, and marital instability of Chinese couples: An actor-partner interdependence mediation model. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 154, 109689.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109689>

Appendix A: Participation Invitation Letter

**Doctoral student seeks participants who have been recently divorced.
(less than 2 years)**

**This study will explore the experiences of individuals' prideful interactions
regarding their communication with their former spouse.**

Dear Invitee,

My name is Amanda Harms. I am a doctoral student at Walden University's Social Psychology Program. I am kindly requesting your participation in a doctoral research study that I am conducting titled: Divorcees' Experiences of Hubristic Pride in Communication in Previous Marital Relationships. The intention of this study is to understand how individuals experience hubristic pride in their communication and how hubristic pride affects communication. To clarify, hubristic pride is considered the negative form of pride, characterized by inauthentic traits such as arrogance, egotism, and conceit.

About the Study:

- This study involves a 45–60-minute interview, in person, via Zoom, or over the phone, collecting demographic information and experiences of divorced individuals regarding communication in their previous marriage.
- You will be compensated with a 25-dollar Amazona gift card
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identify you.

Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Participants must meet these requirements:

- Must be 18 years of age and older
- Must be divorced less than two years
- Must not be actively involved in ongoing child custody proceedings

If you meet the requirements and would be willing to participate in the study, please contact the researcher Amanda Harms

Your participation in the research will be of great importance in assisting social change by supporting the preservation of marital bonds, strengthening family units, and reducing financial burdens for all involved.

Sincerely,

Amanda Harms, M.A., Doctoral Student, Walden University

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview
RQ1: What are the experiences of divorcees' hubristic pride affecting communication in their previous marital relationships?
<p>Opening statement: Thank you for being willing to participate in my research study about the experiences of hubristic pride affecting communication within your prior marriage.</p> <p>Before we begin, I wanted to share with you what hubristic pride entails, because when we discuss pride in our interview, I am referring to this type of pride. In my research, I found hubristic pride referred to as being arrogant, haughty, selfish, conceited, and stuck-up.</p> <p>Please know that I will be recording the interview, and all information that is shared, including your identity will be kept confidential. Only the information you share during this interview will be shared with my dissertation committee.</p> <p>This interview has 10 questions with a few sub-questions. I will be talking with you about your prior marriage and what you have experienced regarding hubristic pride. It should take about 45-60 minutes. If at any time you do not want to answer a question or wish to stop the interview, please let me know.</p> <p>Once the interview is complete, you will be given a 25-dollar Amazon gift card as a thank you for your time.</p> <p>Do you have any questions before we begin?</p> <p>Thank you again for being willing to participate in this research.</p> <p>Demographic Information</p> <p>Gender:</p> <p>Age:</p> <p>Ethnicity:</p> <p>Location:</p> <p>Education:</p>
<p>Interview Questions:</p> <p>Q1: How long were you married, and how long have you been divorced?</p> <p>Q2: Tell me your thoughts about your previous marriage. What do you think led to the divorce?</p> <p>Q3: What was the experience like for you within your previous marriage?</p>

Q4: How would you describe your ex-spouse's behaviors within the marriage?

Q5: What was communication like for you in your previous marriage?

Q6: What was your experience like communicating your needs to your ex-spouse?

Q7: How did emotions play a role in your interactions with your ex-spouse?

Q8: What were your experiences like with hubristic pride playing a role in your interactions with your ex-spouse?

Q9: What experiences have you had with prideful feelings toward your ex-spouse?

Q10: In what ways did you experience change over time regarding your communication with your ex-spouse?

Closing statement:

Thank you so much for your participation. I appreciate your time and all the information you shared. You will be compensated with a 25-dollar Amazon gift card. When the study is complete, I will contact you and provide the results for you via email. Please feel free to contact me anytime if you have any questions or concerns. Your information is important, and I want you to know that it will be treated in the highest regard. If you do have concerns about the study, please review the consent form and contact my dissertation committee. They will be happy to help you and answer any questions, as will I. Thank you again for your time.