

## **Idiosyncrasy of the self and what it means for the recruitment of self as a point of reference in social judgments**

The goal of the proposed program of research is to advance our understanding regarding the role of bringing to mind elements of self-knowledges as a source of information (a reference point) in thinking about others, particularly others that we do not know very well. While this problem is not new to psychology, it continues to generate large quantities of research and is a subject of heated debates in professional literature, including such high-impact journals as *Psychological Review*. The disagreements are not trivial, the question has implications for at least two areas of social cognition research: (1) psychology of social judgments and (2) psychology of the processes underlying understanding of others and empathy. Both of those areas are firmly grounded not only in academic psychology but also in broader societal applications such as conflict resolution (including inter-group and international conflict) and policies promoting development of future more harmonious societies.

Our main focus in addressing the issue is on the idiosyncratic nature of self-knowledge: unlike what we know about other people, self-knowledge emphasizes characteristics that are not directly observable from the outside - our thoughts, feelings, hopes, intentions, etc. and not such observable characteristics as facial expression, speech, or behavior. We intend to show that this idiosyncrasy of the self may normally hinder the process of activating self-knowledge when thinking about others. Furthermore, we intend to demonstrate that self-knowledge regarding one's past (e.g., myself ten years ago) is more balanced with respect to the emphasis on the unobservable versus observable content compared to the self-knowledge regarding the present (e.g., myself recently). As a result, self-knowledge regarding person's past is more compatible with how we think about others and therefore is more likely to be invoked as a point of reference.

Participants in our experiments will be asked to make judgments regarding themselves and/or others using computers. Methodologically, our focus will be primarily not on the judgments themselves but on the latencies of responding (reaction times). For instance, we will be comparing average time, measured in milliseconds, needed to make judgements regarding unobservable (e.g., feels sad?) and observable (e.g., looks sad?) characteristics for self recently, self in the past, another person recently, and another person in the past. We predict that, overall, the emphasis on unobservable should make self-judgments faster for unobservable than for observable characteristics. The reversed pattern would be expected for judgments regarding others, with faster judgments regarding observable characteristics. Yet, we also expect that such differences will be less pronounced for judgments involving (distant) past. Thus, with the passage of time, compatibility between self-knowledge and knowledge regarding others should increase, making self a more suitable candidate for the role of reference point in judgments regarding others.

A total of 8 experiments will be conducted. Latencies of responding will be the primary measure of interest in each of the experiments. Specific research procedures will vary depending on the goals of each experiment. Participants will be tested individually in experimental sessions lasting 30-40 min. A total of about 700 participants will be needed for the 8 experiments. Participation will be voluntary, most participants will be college students enrolled in either stationary or night/ weekend programs in schools either in Warsaw or outside of Warsaw. It is expected that, based on the results, at least three papers will be published in high impact journals. Data will also be presented at international conferences.