

Some goals that people pursue are particularly dear and important to them, because they define their identity. That is, these goals help individuals to respond to the question of who do I want to become? So-called self-defining goals (e.g., aspiring to be a good parent, being fit or living in balance with nature) make individuals engage in various activities in order to achieve the state of self-completeness. So far, research has studied the phenomenon of self-completeness with respect to a single self-defining goal pursuit only. In this project, our primal aim is to explore consequences of and circumstances under which people pursue multiple self-defining goals. For example, we will explore situations when someone strives to be a good parent and a good professional at the same time or situation when people hold a bicultural identity, e.g. of being a German and a Turkish, or a Ukrainian and a Polish person.

The overarching goal of the proposed research planned in Poland and Germany is to deepen our understanding of the interaction of multiple identity goals. The project is divided into three thematic blocks. First, we will explore whether and how striving towards self-completeness in multiple goals depends on the available resources. We argue that individuals who strive towards two identity goals at the same time prefer means that help to achieve both of these goals (i.e., multifinal means) over means that only serve one of the goals (i.e., unifinal means). To test these hypotheses we will perform laboratory and field studies with samples of persons with bicultural identity, having children and accomplishing professional careers, and persons caring for health and environment at the same time.

Second, we will test how structural properties of identity goal systems affect what people think and do. We propose that two goals that people perceive as having a lot in common will be associated with less conflict between them. We will test this hypothesis with persons who strive for goals of being moral and competent at the same time, or women who are pregnant and care for their unborn children but also stay on a restrictive diet such as vegetarianism.

Third, we will investigate empirically whether the structure of identity goal systems is malleable. We hypothesize that this is indeed the case assuming that context variables (i.e., salience of shared means) can alter the perceived overlap of identity goals, thereby reducing goal conflict. We will explore whether goal overlap can be achieved by an effective intervention related to planning, by making goal overlap salient, and by inducing awareness of hypocrisy.

The effect of this project will be the proposition of a novel framework of Identity Goal Systems, in which we aim to integrate two major theories foundational for psychology of goal striving: Symbolic Self-completion Theory and Goal Systems Theory. We hope, however, that the results may bring practical benefits in more applied fields of research.