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IDEAL SELF COMPLEXITY AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES\*

When do ideals influence functioning? The author assumes that the high complexity of the ideal self favors social attitudes consistent with axiological standards. Two correlative studies are presented: Study 1, with the participation of students from the University of Warsaw ( $N = 118$ ), and Study 2, with the participation of young Internet users ( $N = 326$ ). The hypothesis predicted that the number of ideal self attributes would correlate with egalitarian and pro-life attitudes. In both studies, participants were supposed to generate traits of the ideal self-reflecting its complexity (ISC). In Study 1, the asymmetry effect in the ratings of physical distance between Self and Outgroup members was measured. In Study 2, a questionnaire was applied to measure attitudes towards egalitarian and pro-life rules. The results of both studies show that groups with lower ISC levels displayed a more stereotypical perception of distance between Self and Outgroup members as well as less egalitarian and less pro-life attitudes compared to groups with higher ISC levels.

**Keywords:** desired self: ought self vs. ideal self, axiological complexity and axiological emotionality, asymmetry in Self–Outgroup distance rating, egalitarian and pro-life attitudes.

Psychological studies on the role of ideals in the regulation of functioning concern most clearly the significance of the ideal self. It has been assumed (for a long time and in many theoretical currents) that the mind generates not only a person's self-image and the concept of the real (*actual*) self but also desirable visions of the self, with considerable regulatory importance (James, 1890; Cooley, 1902; Festinger, 1954; Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1959; Reykowski, 1975,

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1979, 1990; Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1988; Higgins, 1987; Trzebińska, 1998; Tesser, Felson, & Suls, 2004). Visions of the desired self may have a form not only concrete but also abstract. Therefore, research in this area contributes well to psychological reflection on the still mysterious issue of the influence that purely mental visions of oneself (and the world) have on actual behavior.

Still, the question of the sources of desirable visions of the self (i.e., the question of where they stem from) is addressed relatively seldom, being more often associated with the role of behavior patterns as well as social rewards and punishments (Freud, 1961; Mead, 1975) than axiological premises (Piaget, 1967; Kohlberg, 1976; Wojtyła, 1986). What undoubtedly requires attention is the distinction between imitating other people's behaviors and the role of social obligations and prohibitions as well as the reinforcements that accompany them on the one hand – and, on the other, the role of ideals that stem from abstract axiological concepts articulated by the subject himself or herself (Wierzbicka, 2009; Jarymowicz, 2012).

From the psychological point of view, the above postulate refers to the distinction between the regulatory role of *normal state standards* and *ideal state standards* (Reykowski, 1975). The former originate in the existing social order and in what is (at a given time) considered to be the norm – pointing to an algorithm of behavior. The latter may come into being by extrapolation of the norm (i.e., recognizing the norm as an ideal) or derive from superior values, having the form of abstract axiological concepts referring to good and evil – providing behavioral heuristics. Norms and values are concepts that should be precisely distinguished, but in social sciences this is not the case (cf. Joas, 2009).

In the psychology of the self, an important distinction was made by Higgins (1987) between *ideal self* and *ought self*. These two types of vision of oneself differ fundamentally in their origins and behavior regulation functions. They are jointly referred to as *the desired self*.

#### AN OUTLINE OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN OUGHT SELF AND IDEAL SELF

Higgins' theory constitutes a convenient frame of reference for the development of fundamental research on the regulatory significance of the different types of desired self that the subject aspires to and that the real (actual) self is compared to (cf. Higgins, 1987, 1996; Bąk, 2002, 2005, 2008a, 2008b). In both cases – the ideal self and the ought self – the subject wants to achieve something

that would increase his or her self-satisfaction, but it is something different that is desired in each case. The two types of self have different origins and, consequently, not only different conditions of emergence but also different regulatory effects – in the spheres of personal and social functioning, in the treatment of the world and other people, as well as in determining pathologies and personal development (Bak, 2005, 2008b; Trzebińska, 2012).

The distinction adopted by Higgins concerns two types of desirable visions of self, which it is possible to relate to earlier concepts of self, formulated in various research currents. These two types of visions of self may be briefly characterized as follows.

**The ought self** is a result of the internalization of behavior patterns typical for a given community and the manner of understanding what should or should not be done that is instilled by the environment (frequently through obligations and prohibitions, combined with rewards and punishments). The internalization of social standards results in the subject's readiness to adjust his or her behavior to them. It is, however, accompanied by a sense of pressure, a sense of duty (sometimes coercion) to fulfill social expectations, and a sense of one's own weakness when behavior departs from what it ought to be. Everyone has a self of this type, since everyone is, to some extent, subject to the demands of socialization; but we differ in the degree to which that self is developed and threatens psychological comfort if expectations are not fulfilled. Departure from ought self standards evokes shame and fear of external sanctions, and after they have been internalized – they also evoke a sense of guilt and remorse (as in the case of the Freudian *superego*). By contrast, the fulfillment of ought self standards is a source of positive relief emotions (thanks to providing liberation from disagreeable pressure): we want to be as others – those we are dependent on – expect us to be, even if we are not enthusiastic about their standards. We suffer when we fail to succeed in this. This type of self-images is connected with positive–negative asymmetry (Czapiński, 1988; Peeters & Czapiński, 1990): it is negative emotions that play the dominant role in the regulation of functioning.

**The ideal self** is the anticipated, better, attractive visions of oneself. Where do ideal self standards stem from? Two kinds of sources may be identified. (1) Some stem from the internalization of and the “liking” taken to the behavior patterns and the expectations of the environment – from the acceptance of what others value and live by. This provides ideas concerning what is worth pursuing and what traits are worth developing in oneself. (2) Some of the ideal self standards go beyond the patterns, social comparisons, or willingness to reproduce the standards of what has been recognized as valuable by one's environment. The

source of ideal self standards may be new ideas: new ways of understanding good and new ways of putting it into practice. They are available for those who manage to fathom out (through their own reflection) the meaning of abstract concepts referring to values and come to like these values. Desirable visions of oneself may stem from axiological standards. They may become a source not only of desires but also of hope for self-improvement. The fulfillment of standards is a source of satisfaction and failure to fulfill them does not evoke anxiety (because ideals are visions of something that cannot be fully attained) – passive emotions emerge: a certain disillusionment, disappointment with oneself, and sorrow. Self-images of this kind involve an asymmetry that can be called negative–positive, since it is positive emotions that play the initiating and dominant role in the regulation of functioning.

The distinction outlined above suggests that versions of desirable visions of self may stem from standards either imposed or beloved. These are not, in fact, disjunct categories, since what originally stems from being subject to social pressure may become assimilated and adopted as one's own. It can be expected, however, that desired self standards associated with social expectations lead to different results than the standards a person has recognized himself or herself as ideal. It is probably the latter, stemming from one's own understanding of concepts referring to values, that have greater regulatory power (Oleś, 2011). It can be supposed that they result in greater willingness to act in accordance with the recognized standards (Jarymowicz, 2008).

The aim of the two studies presented below was to examine the relations between manifestations of ideal self complexity and the directly or indirectly measured manifestations of social attitudes. Both studies were aimed at verifying the same hypothesis, based on the three assumptions listed below.

(1) The high degree of ideal self complexity depends to a relatively small extent on social obligations. Culture is, of course, a source of axiological concepts and ideals that derive from them, concerning the self and the world, but the formation of these concepts and ideals in the mind of a given subject as well as the person's adoption of ideals as his or her own cannot, in principle, be subject to such normative pressures and restrictions as those that behaviors are subject to, being observable to the environment.

(2) The greater the number of ideal self attributes, the greater the probability that they came into being thanks to the formation of axiological concepts in the mind of a particular subject.

(3) Relating the axiological concepts to the self should be accompanied by relating them to the world beyond the self – which follows from the nature of

axiological concepts: they concern general good and favor evaluating the world in non-egocentric terms.

### Introduction to Research Problems

The studies presented below are connected with our investigations concerning the regulatory role of emotions originating in various sources (Jarymowicz, 2009). In the proposed taxonomy of human emotions (Jarymowicz & Imbir, 2010), we attempted to make a distinction between (1) automatic emotions (originating in homeostatic or hedonic mechanisms) vs. (2) reflective emotions – originating in reflection and in the use of conceptual standards of evaluation (referring either to the self or to general good or evil). We are particularly interested in research on the regulatory role of reflective emotions – including the role of emotions stemming from ideal visions of oneself and the world associated with abstract axiological concepts (cf. Jasielska & Jarymowicz, 2012; Jarymowicz, 2012).

Abstract axiological concepts (such as humanitarianism, justice, or loyalty) may continually be a source of new ideas concerning desirable states of reality. They determine unique, specifically human rules of evaluating the world, the goals that the subject pursues, and hopes for their achievement (Gołąb, 1978; Reykowski, 1979, 1990; Snyder, 1994; Kozielski, 1997; Eisenberg, 2000; Hoffman, 2006; Szuster, 2005). It is them that prevent evaluation processes from being reducible to the history of reinforcements registered by the brain (Gazzaniga, 2011).

Abstract axiological concepts are the source of behavioral heuristics, never fully defined. They are marked by an indeterminacy – as regards the number and type of behavioral designata. Over the centuries, the people of various epochs and cultures tried and have still been trying to define concepts of this kind, and there constantly appear new ways of understanding what good, honest, and sensible life means (cf. Portman, 2010; Pinker, 2011). This indeterminacy leads to a tendency to be guided by how others realize good (to be guided by what the normative order determines) – which often reduces the influence of superior values (axiological concepts) on social life. But the fact that this influence is commonly regarded as insufficient means that axiological concepts and ideals deriving from them function in people's minds, and what constitutes a problem is their translatability into the goals of actions and the rules of behavior.

We assume (cf. Jarymowicz, 2012) that the influence of superior values (however they are defined in a particular epoch and culture) on the functioning

of each subject depends on two conditions. The first condition is one's own subjective understanding of abstract concepts associated with values (such as responsibility, subjectivity, or tolerance); meeting this prerequisite manifests itself in the ability to identify different designata of a given concept (such as meeting one's obligations or respect for other people's religious identity) – their number is called the degree of *axiological complexity*. The other condition is positive evaluation of a given concept (which we refer to as *axiological emotionality*) and its association with one's self – with *ideal self standards*.

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES, HYPOTHESIS, AND METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The aim of the studies presented below was to observe the manifestations of the complexity of desired self standards (ought self standards and ideal self standards) as well as direct and indirect manifestations of social attitudes, and to analyze the relations between these two categories of variables. The study was supposed to verify the hypothesis that a relatively high level of ideal self complexity accompanies manifestations of social attitudes consistent with axiological standards, such as equality and respect for life.

In order to determine the content of the desired self, ready-made lists of virtues are often used that participants in studies willingly relate to their respective selves. What seemed a much better method was to use a tool in which participants would face the necessity of enumerating the desirable traits of self on their own. We assumed that a task of this kind, formulated unexpectedly in the course of the study (i.e., in a scenery that was new to participants), would facilitate generating associations connected in the mind with their own selves and at the same time impede generating ideas selectively to conform to social expectations. These assumptions determined the structure of two simple techniques applied in the studies presented below. In Study 1, each participant had two tasks to do (for their exact instructions, see below): to enumerate “any number” of (1) traits they believe they ought to possess (which was supposed to refer to the ought self) vs. (2) traits they would be most glad to possess (which was supposed to refer to the ideal self). In Study 2, the task was to generate any desirable traits of self – based on the assumption that the more traits are enumerated the more probable it becomes that ideal self standards with axiological origins do play a part. The indicator of the complexity of self-standards was, in both cases, the number of traits generated.

Another aim was to measure attitudes connected with axiological standards. This kind of intention is a real challenge. How to establish which categories of attitudes (such as supporting charities or being in favor of full freedom of expression) may be considered representative for concepts referring to superior and universal values and which are unrelated or contrary to them? After all, it may seem disputable whether being in favor of relaxing penalties for wrongdoers has axiological value. As regards this issue, it should be assumed that the essence of axiological concepts lies in the endless search for their meaning. Successive generations of people lived with the conviction that they knew very well what sin consisted in, and the meaning of this concept did change over the centuries (cf. Portman, 2010).

In the present research, we assume that certain attitudes exhibited by people from the examined populations have an axiological character – insofar as they are related to axiological arguments in public debate. For example, supporting the maintenance of capital punishment may stem from reasons such as hatred for the wrongdoer or desire for revenge, but what determines legal regulations in our times – in our culture – is axiological standards.

We assume that psychological research on the relations between how axiological concepts are understood by a particular individual and that individual's attitudes towards reality concern not so much the axiological validity of the former as relations between two categories of psychological processes: (1) the ways in which a particular subject understands the meaning of abstract concepts and (2) his or her attitudes towards the world. In other words, we regard as valuable the studies that aim to analyze the influence of verbalized evaluative concepts on attitudes towards the surrounding world and one's functioning in it.

STUDY 1:  
STEREOTYPICAL RATING OF SELF–OUTGROUP DISTANCES  
AND THE COMPLEXITY  
OF OUGHT SELF AND IDEAL SELF

In the first of the two studies (Archutowska, 2009), manifestations of discriminatory attitudes towards Outgroup members were measured indirectly – using the “distance rating” technique. The technique measures asymmetry in the assessment of Self–Others distance, including Self–Outgroup distance (Kamińska-Feldman, 1994). The number of the generated desired self attributes and ideal self attributes was also measured – using the author's own technique.

### The Method of Measuring Asymmetry in Self–Outgroup Distance Rating

According to the results of numerous studies (Codol, 1985; Codol et al., 1989; Kamińska-Feldman 1994, 2002, 2012; Kamińska-Feldman & Jarymowicz, 2006; Jarymowicz, 2006), the assessment of objectively identical distances between the same two objects is accompanied by a peculiar illusion, depending on (1) which object is more salient and (2) which object is being compared to the other one. In Self–Others comparisons, it is usually self that is more salient, which causes an effect known as egocentric asymmetry.

The egocentric asymmetry effect consists in assessing identical Self–Other vs. Other–Self distance differently. Distance from Self to Other is estimated to be greater than Other to Self distance. But when comparisons concern Outgroup members, who are stigmatized, the effect is reversed. Stigmatized Others are more salient (“they are visible everywhere, at first glance” – cf. Kwiatkowska, 1999), and this results in distance from Outgroup members to Self being estimated as greater. Such reverse asymmetry effect has been recognized to be a manifestation of stereotypical perception of other people, connected with discriminative attitudes (Kamińska-Feldman, 2002).

Marta Kamińska-Feldman (1994) developed a graphic technique of measuring the asymmetry effect in the rating of distances between Self and Outgroup members representing different nationalities. Nationalities are denoted by typical names (such as Samuel, Olaf, or Antonio). In this technique, points representing Self and individuals of different nationalities are marked on a 11 x 17 cm (4.3 x 6.7 in.) rectangle. A participant rates the same distances – for example, between Self and a Frenchman and between a Frenchman and Self. A different French name is used in each question within the pair (e.g., Pierre and Jean); the difference is measured between ratings of objectively identical distances from Self to Pierre and from Jean to Self.

In the graphic version used in Archutowska’s study, points marked on a rectangle represented Self and individuals bearing Jewish and Asian names – among others, “participating in an international congress.” Participants were asked to imagine that these individuals were “having a break between sessions in the hall of the congress center.” Their task was to rate the distance between Self and the people indicated in questions (the instruction said that 1 cm / 0.4 in. in the drawing corresponded to 3 m / 10 ft in real space). The task comprised between ten and twenty questions – including pairs in which the task was to estimate distances from Self to Isaac vs. from Aaron to Self in one pair of questions and from Self to Tochiro vs. from Changa to Self in the other – the distances



being in fact identical. Comparing distance estimations in a given pair allowed to obtain an asymmetry indicator, being the difference between the two estimations of identical distances: Self–Outgroup and Outgroup–Self. In the examples given, this was the indicator of asymmetry in Self–Jews and Self–Asians distance rating.

In the present research, with the use of this type of tasks, a majority of (Polish) participants estimated the distance between Self and Outgroup members – such as Swedes, Frenchmen, or Czechs – in a manner referred to as egocentric asymmetry effect. However, when comparisons concerned Jews or Asians, we obtained reverse effects (Kamińska-Feldman & Jarymowicz, 2006; Jarymowicz, 2006).

#### Measuring Ought Self Complexity and Ideal Self Complexity

The complexity level of the two versions of desired self was measured using Archutowska's (2009) method "My Traits." This was a two-part technique that began with a description of two tasks. (1) The first task concerned **the ought self** and was formulated as follows: "*Think of what you **are not** happy about with regard to yourself. Think of traits whose lack evokes emotions such as shame or remorse in you. Write down the traits that you ought to possess and that it would bring you a sense of relief to possess.*" (2) The second task concerned **the ideal self** and was the following: "*Think of what traits you would **most of all** like to form and develop in yourself. Enumerate those traits that are the most desirable for you and that it would give you plenty of joy and satisfaction to possess.*"

Below these instructions, there was a table with two columns. Each column contained an unfinished sentence: 1. "I ought to be..." and 2. "I would most of all like to be..." Placing the two sentences side by side was meant to contrast them clearly. In each column there were numbered lines for writing down individual traits. The traits generated were counted. Their number was considered to be the indicator of the complexity of each form of the desired self.

#### Empirical Hypothesis, Sample, and Results

It was hypothesized that individuals rating Self–Outgroup distance stereotypically would turn out to have lower levels of ideal self complexity than indi-

viduals rating Self–Outgroup distances typically (that is, in accordance with egocentric asymmetry effect).

Participants in the study were students of Warsaw’s various universities, living in dormitories. The examined sample consisted of 120 participants – 73 women and 47 men. Mean age was 21.4 ( $SD = 1.58$ ).

In the examined sample, individuals were identified with indicators of different types of asymmetry in (1) Self–Jews and (2) Self–Asians distance rating. In the former case, half of the participants had indicators of egocentric asymmetry and in the latter case the number of such people was much lower. This result means that Asian names provoked stronger effects typical for reaction to Outgroup members than Jewish names.

In order to verify the hypothesis, two clearly contrasted groups were distinguished in the entire sample. These were people who were found to have indicators of egocentric asymmetry effect or reverse asymmetry effect for both types of comparisons: (1) Self–Asians and (2) Self–Jews:

– ASYM-1 group comprised individuals with indicators showing typical egocentric asymmetry with regard to both Outgroup categories ( $n = 17$ ),

– ASYM-2 group comprised individuals with indicators of reverse asymmetry, showing stereotypical perception of both Outgroup categories ( $n = 16$ ).

For the groups thus distinguished, indicators of the generated attributes of desired self were counted first of all: ought self and ideal self attributes jointly. It turned out that ASYM-1 group generated significantly more desired self attributes than ASYM-2 group – the respective means were: 7.31 vs. 4.88,  $t(31) = 2.870$ ,  $p = .007$ .

It also turned out that the groups did not differ significantly in the number of generated ought self traits (respective means: 3.62 vs. 2.90) but did differ significantly in the number of generated ideal self traits: 3.68 vs. 1.90,  $t(31) = 3.039$ ,  $p = .005$ .

## Discussion

Two groups of people were compared, each with a different type of asymmetry effect. In rating (objectively identical) Self–Outgroup vs. Outgroup–Self distances, some participants were under the typical – egocentric – illusion that Self–Outgroup distance was greater than Outgroup–Self distance. Other participants, by contrast, rated Outgroup–Self distance as greater than Self–Outgroup distance.

The kind of illusion that takes the form of egocentric asymmetry is interpreted as a manifestation of one's own self as the prototype and the habitual point of reference in social perception (Codol, 1985): it is Others that are related to Self, not the other way around. Consequently, Others seem to be closer to Self than Self to Others (Codol, Jarymowicz, Kamińska-Feldman & Szuster, 1989). In accordance with this interpretation, it is assumed that the reverse effect is a manifestation of resistance against relating Outgroup members to Self (in this case: imaginary Asian and Jewish "congress participants") and of a tendency to keep them at a somewhat greater distance. Such an interpretation may be regarded as plausible in the light of data collected by Kamińska-Feldman (2002). In one of the studies, in the group of people with reverse asymmetry effect (as in ASYM-2 group), the author obtained significantly higher IAT indicators (Greenwald, McGhee & Schwarz, 1998) than among individuals with the typical egocentric asymmetry error (as in ASYM-1 group), IAT indicator being regarded as a manifestation of defavoring Outgroup members (Jarymowicz, 2006).

In the presented study, groups with different asymmetry effects in the rating of Self–Outgroup distances were found to differ also in the number of generated desired self traits. However, they did not differ in the number of ought self traits while differing significantly in the number of ideal self traits. This result appears to support the supposition that it is ideal self complexity, not ought self complexity, that favors openness to Outgroup members. If we assume that ought self standards are determined by reference groups, the pressure of such groups concerns intra-group loyalty rather than sensitivity to Outgroup members (Kwiatkowska, 1999; Jarymowicz, 2006).

#### STUDY 2:

#### THE COMPLEXITY OF DESIRED SELF STANDARDS AND MANIFESTATIONS OF AXIOLOGY-BASED ATTITUDES

In the second study (Mastalerz, 2012), the number of generated desired self attributes was measured, without a distinction being made between ideal and ought self traits. Also measured were the declared attitudes towards various social phenomena currently discussed in Poland and the related legal regulations. The subject of analysis was, among other things, those attitudes that have been associated with axiological standards (such as attitude to euthanasia).

### The Method of Measuring Desired Self Complexity

The level of desired self complexity was measured using Anna Chrzanoska's (2009) "My Desired Traits" method. The participants' task was introduced as follows: "*Now, please focus on yourself... Please think of traits that you would like to possess. Write down the associations that come to your mind when you think about what kind of person you would like to be.*"

Below, there were numbered lines for writing down individual traits. The traits generated were counted. Their number was considered to be the indicator of desired self complexity.

### The Method of Declared Attitudes Measurement

The questionnaire used contained 12 questions concerning issues currently (in 2011) discussed in Poland. The set of questions was preceded by an unfinished sentence "*In my opinion ...*" which was followed by statements such as "*... radio and television license fee should be abolished.*"

The questions included in the questionnaire were divided into two groups – by a team of competent judges (graduate seminar participants). Half of the 12 questions were considered "buffer" questions – meaning ones concerning issues not related to superior values. Apart from the one cited above, these were questions concerning the scope of presidential power, retirement age, priestly celibacy, or the recognition of January 6th – Epiphany – as a public holiday. The remaining six questions were regarded as "diagnostic" ones – as those that are associated with axiological premises in public discourse. Two questions concerned **equality**: (1) "*... a minimum percentage of women in the Polish Parliament should be established in order to prevent gender discrimination*"; (2) "*... homosexuals should be allowed to enter into formal relationships*". Four questions concerned **life protection**, but they were formulated in a **counter-ideal** manner: (1) "*... so-called soft drugs should be legalized*"; (2) "*... euthanasia should be legalized*"; (3) "*... capital punishment should be reintroduced in Poland*"; (4) "*... weapon possession should be made easier.*"

Answers were to be given using a 5-point scale: from 1 – *strongly disagree*, to 5 – *strongly agree*.

### Empirical Hypothesis, Sample, and Results

A hypothesis was formulated, predicting that individuals with relatively high complexity of desired self standards would be in favor of egalitarian solutions and against infringing on pro-life standards – to a degree relatively higher than individuals with relatively low complexity of desired self standards.

The study was conducted via the Internet. It was directed to volunteers through social networking sites and Internet forums; information and appeal for participation was also passed to friends and acquaintances. The number of participants was 326, most of them being women (237 women and 89 men). Mean age was 24.3 ( $SD = 4.6$ ). The participants were mostly inhabitants of Warsaw, students and people with higher education.

Demographic variables did not differentiate the results. Participants were divided into two groups – which differed in the number of desired self traits generated:

- relatively low (0-4) – Group 1 ( $n = 178$ )
- relatively high (5-8) – Group 2 ( $n = 148$ ).

It turned out that answers to the questions of the attitudes questionnaire considered to be “buffer” questions did not differentiate Group 1 from Group 2. What the groups did differ in was answers to questions considered to be “diagnostic” – with one exception: the question concerning the legalization of soft drugs did not differentiate the groups. Presented below are comparisons of mean indicators referring to egalitarian attitudes (answers to two questions in total; means for each of the two questions differed in the same direction) and pro-life attitudes (answers to three questions in total; means for each of the three questions differed in the same direction).

Compared to Group 2 (with relatively high indicators of desired self complexity), Group 1 (with relatively low indicators of desired self complexity) was found to have:

- significantly lower indicators of agreement to egalitarian proposals – the means being 2.8 for Group 1 vs. 3.1 for Group 2,  $t(324) = 2.91$ ;  $p = .004$  – and at the same time – significantly higher indicators of agreement to proposals threatening life (respective means: 2.3 vs. 2.0,  $t(324) = 3.42$ ;  $p = .001$ ).

### Discussion

The analyzed data were obtained in a relatively large sample of anonymous participants in the Internet-based study. The groups were distinguished by one

indicator only: the number of desired self attributes generated. The indicators of the attitudes measured were found to differ significantly between the compared groups.

Individuals with relatively low complexity of desired self standards were found to have a mean level of support for egalitarian demands (the proportion of people of different genders in the Polish Sejm and the approval of formal relationships of homosexuals) below the middle of the scale applied. In contrast, corresponding indicators above the middle of the scale were found in the case of participants with relatively high complexity of desired self standards.

As regards the issue of proposed legal regulations threatening human life (permitting euthanasia, death penalty, and the possession of weapons), both groups of participants obtained mean levels of support below the middle of the scale, but individuals with relatively high complexity of desired self standards declared a significantly higher level of objection than those with relatively low complexity of desired self standards.

The results, then, turned out to be as expected. It had been assumed that the manifestations of attitudes recognized by judges as consistent with axiological standards would be accompanied by relatively high complexity of desired self standards. Such was precisely the result obtained in the presented study.

#### FINAL COMMENTS

It is worth noting that superior values have a culturally universal character. Both ought and ideal self standards should be consistent with them. A necessary condition is the subject's recognition of particular values as his or her own and including them in the repertoire of desired traits. Such was the assumption we made with regard to the second of the presented studies. As regards attitudes to Outgroup members, it may be assumed that social obligations very seldom inspire love for those who are different. Quite the opposite: emphasis is placed on respecting intra-group patterns of behavior and norms (Tajfel, 1978; Kofta, 2004). It is emphasized in social psychology that divisions into Ingroup and Outgroup are accompanied by a common lack, in the repertoire of ought standards, of the requirement of loving such neighbors who are not included among Ingroup members (cf. Kwiatkowska, 1999; Kofta & Jasińska-Kania, 2001; Jarymowicz, 2006). In order to overcome these divisions, it is necessary to develop axiological concepts – since it is only them that refer to the common good. Consequently,

the best predictor of Outgroup acceptance should be ideals deriving from axiological concepts, associated with ideal self.

Naturally, the research conducted gives little insight into the general issues raised here. It was meant to be a kind of exploration, taken up as a result of the belief that concepts of great importance to people's spiritual development and social behavior were marginalized in empirical psychology. Perhaps a critical judgment of what has been described in the present article will inspire other researchers to carry out more effective investigations.

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