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*Self-Related Factors Explaining Double Standards
in Assessing Emotional Costs of Victims Suffering
from Severe and Trifling Offenses*

Czynniki związane z Ja wyjaśniające „podwójne standardy” w zakresie szacowania emocjonalnych kosztów osób będących ofiarami poważnych i drobnych wykroczeń

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ABSTRACT

The role of emotions in moral behaviors is emphasized by many neuroscientists and philosophers. From psychological point of view, solving moral dilemmas is impossible in isolation from cognitive-emotional processes related to the self. This study aimed to test self-related factors explaining discrepancies in the judgement of hostility and sadness experienced by someone else's victim and the judge's own victim, suffering from severe and trifling offences. The research was conducted in both experimental and correlational paradigms, with response surface analysis (RSA) as a key method of data analysis. Total number of participants was 171. The questionnaires used were: The Self-Motive Items (SMI), Self-Esteem Scale (SES), Ten Items Personality Inventory (TIPI-PL) and The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Expanded Form. According to the results, self-esteem is a predictor of (in)congruence of the levels of hostility attributed to victims suffering from severe offenses, while the motives of self-enhancement and self-assessment predict particular patterns of (mis)matches in the levels of hostility attributed to victims suffering from trifling offenses. Discussion of the findings deals, *inter alia*, with the role of self-perspective in effective recognition of other people's emotional states.

Keywords: hostility; victim; self-enhancement; self-esteem; response surface analysis

INTRODUCTION

Assessing what is wrong and what is bad is a subject of morality. This short and simple statement refers to a philosophical struggle of unspeakable importance for foundations of human's functioning in social context. Interpretation of morality and values as stable and universal or changeable and individual has been changing accordingly to breakthrough social events (e.g. French or Russian revolution or sexual revolution in the USA). Commonly known Kantian system of moral decision making via categorical imperatives presents duty and respect for law as the only rightful motivations of moral behavior (Kant, 2002). Although law obedience may be considered as an affective force, i.e. a moral feeling of pleasure or displeasure (Senderowicz, 2011), Kant rejects significance of emotions like empathy, compassion and shame in moral decision making and comes out with a proposal that metaphysical capacity for understanding what is morally good or wrong is present within each and every person, regardless of educational, social or any other distinguishing statuses (Thorpe, 2006). On the other hand, Hume's empirical theory of mind locates the source of moral thinking in *passions*, i.e. emotions, giving them priority over reason (Hume, 2001). This theoretical proposition remains convincing in the light of broad neuroscience research on morality, indicating that moral dilemmas are indeed not only subjects of cognitive, but also emotional processes (Killen, Smetana, 2008). For example, findings of the studies investigating the activity of particular brain structures and endocrine system (especially oxytocin and vasopressin) suggest that morality is in fact a generalization of the sense of belonging and care towards one's offspring (Churchland, 2018). In this approach, the original bond between parents and children is connected with the goal of protecting the offspring from death and suffering. In a process of socialization, this hormonal-neurological code of emotional reaction towards offspring is generalizing and transforming into moral standards of behavior towards unrelated individuals (Churchland, 2018). What is more, the intuition of the significance of emotions in morality can be observed even in the five-year-old children (Danovitch, Keil, 2008) and emotional reaction to crime seems to appear in different countries (Matsumoto, Hwang, 2015). For the above reasons, emotions may be considered as an unconscious, basic language of morality; a compass transmitting the hurt of others into our own emotional reactions, like empathy and compassion on the one hand, and shame and guilt (as forms of self-punishment for not obeying social norms) on the other (Elsenbroich, Gilbert, 2014).

Emotions in morality (i.e. *moral emotions*) can be divided into four groups: emotions concerning others, self-conscious emotions, emotions related to praising others and emotions related to suffering of the others (Vélez García, Ostrosky-Solís, 2006). An example of moral emotion related to others is empathy, however, it is interesting not only what people feel in reaction to someone else's suffering,

but also what predictions they have of the feelings of a sufferer. This issue happens to be important in criminal psychology since it was proved that a victim whose emotional reactions are inadequate to the severity of the offense may be the subject of less empathy (Rose, Nadler, Clark, 2006). What factors affect the judgment of the victim's feelings? An important factor is probably the mentioned severity of the offense, but its status is not entirely clear. At first glance, it seems that the distinction between serious crime (e.g. murder, personal injury, violation of freedom) and much less socially harmful misdemeanor (e.g. little theft, defamation) is not a moral dilemma. For example, we are likely to expect the victim struggling with a serious, long-term health consequence of the car crash to experience stronger negative emotions as compared to the victim of a car steal. However, what happens with the assessment of emotions felt by the victim of an offense if the assessor and the perpetrator are the same person?

The question raised above touches strictly the sphere of the *self*, described by William James (1890) as the only and unavoidable mediator and controller in the person's interactions with the world. The involvement of the self in the situation of the offense in the role of the perpetrator may significantly affect the objectivity of judgement, e.g. due to a person's tendency to keep positive self-view by lowering the expected negative emotional consequences in one's own victim. It appears that at least the two of four cardinal self-motives (i.e. motivational processes engaged in searching for and processing self-related information – Gregg, Heepper, Sedikides, 2011) may be responsible for the level of acceptance or rejection of negative information about being the cause of other people's suffering. One of them, i.e. the motive of *self-enhancement*, denotes the urge to see oneself positively, either by *self-promotion* (i.e. playing up positive attributes) or by *self-protection* (i.e. playing down negative attributes) (Alicke, Sedikides, 2009). However, it is not obvious what kinds of behavior are considered as useful in the processes of self-promotion or self-protection in particular individuals. It cannot be excluded that, e.g. due to immoral tendencies, some people may self-enhance via unethical deeds. In turn, the motive of *self-assessment* denotes the desire to know the truth about oneself, which involves intentional search for objective facts instead of a biased search for preferred information (Trope, 1986). The problem is that despite such noble motivation, people high in self-assessment are not without the risk of overestimation or underestimation when evaluating their own behaviors. Both self-enhancement and self-assessment play their specific roles in the process of building global *self-esteem* (Sedikides, Gaertner, Cai, 2015), defined as a relatively stable positive/negative attitude towards the self (Rosenberg, 1965). Just as importantly, self-esteem and self-enhancement are significant indicators of satisfaction with the self and may also predict higher well-being (Neiss, Sedikides, Stevenson, 2002; O'Mara, Gaertner, Sedikides, Zhou, Liu, 2012). On the contrary, hurting other people is likely to affect well-being of the perpetra-

tor in a negative direction, which makes the self-processes described above even more relevant when considering such type of immoral behavior. The same applies to at least two of the Big Five personality traits (McCrae, Costa, 2003), as these basic tendencies to think, feel and act have proved to be correlated with the values preferred by the person (Athota, Budhwar, Malik, 2019). Agreeableness, by definition strongly associated with empathy (McCrae, Costa, 2003), should both protect against denying that one is the perpetrator of someone else's suffering and increase one's emotional identification with the victim. Neuroticism (i.e. the opposition of emotional stability – McCrae, Costa, 2003) not only provides a first-hand extensive experience in struggling with emotional states like sadness, anger, hostility and depression, but as a consequence may also strengthen the identification with the victim or, on the contrary, block the culprit's overwhelming awareness of being the cause of someone else's suffering. For the purposes of this study, emotions experienced by the victim were limited to sadness and hostility, as they range from emotional pain to aggression, i.e. the two main areas of emotional self-regulation with respect to negative emotionality (Caprara, Di Giunta, Eisenberg, Gerbino, Pastorelli, Tramontano, 2008).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

There were three research questions in this study, of which the first two were investigated in experimental design:

- Question 1 (Q1): Does the severity of the offense (independent variable IV: “Offense”, conditions: “Severe” x “Trifling”) affect the judgment of the victim's sadness/hostility (dependent variables DVs)?
 - Hypothesis 1 (H1): People will judge higher sadness/hostility of the victim of severe offense, as compared to the victim of trifling offense.
- Question 2 (Q2): Does the identity of the perpetrator (IV: “Identity”, conditions: “My victim” x “Not My Victim”) affect the judgment of the victim's sadness/hostility (DV)?
 - Hypothesis 2 (H2): People will judge lower sadness/hostility of their own victim, as compared to someone else's victim (this hypothesis may be justified by the universality and ubiquity of the self-enhancement motive).
- Question 3 (Q3): How is the (in)congruence between one's judgments of emotional consequences (sadness/hostility) in one's own victim and someone else's victim related to the selected aspects of one's self (i.e. self-enhancement/self-assessment/ self-esteem/agreeableness/emotional stability)?

Due to the ambiguous theoretical premises summarized in the introduction section, Q3 was exploratory and investigated in correlational design.

METHOD

This study was run online, distributed via Facebook groups gathering students from various Polish universities. Participants could voluntarily fill in the batteries of tests on Google Forms, with the right to drop out at any convenient moment. General information about the aim of the study (i.e. “investigation of moral attitudes”), anonymity and data protection were provided as well. Subjects did not receive any reward for their participation in this study. Total number of participants was 171, of which 144 were females and 27 males. Participants belonged to two separable experimental groups, accordingly to the conditions of the independent variable “Offense”: “Severe” group [$N = 94$ (79 female), $M_{age} = 22.41$, $SD_{age} = 3.32$] and “Trifling” group [$N = 77$ (65 female), $M_{age} = 22.79$, $SD_{age} = 2.99$]. These sample sizes were dictated by the power analyses (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, Lang, 2009): the number of 77 participants was enough to provide the recommended .80 power to detect medium effects ($R^2 = .15$) in the *response surface analysis* RSA, a statistical method used in order to answer Q3. RSA is “an approach designed to answer questions about how (mis)matching predictors relate to outcomes while avoiding many of the statistical limitations of alternative, often-used approaches” (Barranti, Carlson Cote, 2017, p. 465; see also: Miciuk, Dubas-Miciuk, in press). Many studies have proved the superiority of RSA over e.g. moderated regression, difference scores, residuals, and the truth and bias model (Barranti, Carlson, Cote, 2017; Humberg, Nestler, Back, 2019). The sample sizes established in this way were also sufficient to provide normal distributions for the sake of *t*-test for equality of means (for independent and dependent samples), used to answer Q1 and Q2. Below we describe the scales and tasks included in the batteries of tests used in this study. Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for all measurements in current study are presented in Table 2.

There were two experimental groups (independent samples), each with repeated measurement (dependent samples). This is because judgements of the victim’s sadness and hostility both “Offence” conditions (“Severe”/“Trifling”) were assessed with two purpose-designed tasks presented one after the other (the case of “Not My Victim” and the case of “My Victim”). Each task consisted of two elements: (1) the short story serving as a manipulation setting the experimental conditions of the two independent variables, i.e. severity of the offense and the identity of the perpetrator (English translation of all four short-stories are presented in table 1) and (2) the question: “How do you think? To what extent the victim experiences (because of the described offense) the emotional states listed below?”, followed by the selected items from the PANAS-X, allowing the participant to assess the victim’s sadness and hostility. The PANAS-X is The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Expanded Form by David Watson and Lee Anna Clark (1994) in Polish adaptation by Małgorzata Fajkowska and Magdalena Marszał-Wiśniewska

(2009). This inventory consists of sixty words and phrases describing emotional states to be assessed on a Likert scale and includes subscales measuring sadness and hostility. Cronbach's α coefficients for sadness varied from .87 to .83 for the original version and from .86 to .88 for Polish adaptation; as regards hostility, the coefficients were .82–.83 and .76–.84, respectively. However, for the purposes of this study, only three items with the highest factor loadings were taken from each of these two subscales.

Table 1. Short stories used as manipulations in the experiment

Identity of the perpetrator	Offense	
	Severe	Trifling
	“Imagine the following situation...”	
(The case of NOT MY victim)	“You found the following information in the media: as a result of someone's irresponsible play with firecrackers, a person passing nearby have lost vision irreversibly”.	“A resident of Warsaw stole several bars from a local store. The cashier discovers this by doing a review of the shelves at the end of the day”.
(The case of MY victim)	“You were driving a car under influence of alcohol and caused an accident because of which a young person has to move on a wheelchair for the rest of life”.	“You secretly took out a few rolls from a self-service bakery. Sometime later, the baker notices this, when preparing another batch of take-out sandwiches”.

Note: The equivalence of the short-stories (i.e. “the case of my victim” and “the case of not my victim”) for a given type of crime (i.e. severe and trifling) was confirmed by five independent competent judges (all having M.A. in psychology).

Source: Authors' own study.

Self-enhancement and self-assessment motives were measured by the corresponding subscales of The Self-Motive Items (SMI) by Aiden Gregg, Erica Hepper, and Constantine Sedikides (2011) in Polish adaptation by Miciuk and Oleś (2018). Each motive was measured on a 7-point response scale (1: “totally disagree” – 7: “totally agree”) by the two dedicated items about what a person likes to hear and wants to discover about himself/herself (e.g. “In general, I LIKE to hear the TRUTH about me as a person”). The SMI is a valid, short and elegant measure of individual differences in self-motives. Spearman-Brown split-half reliability coefficients varied from .63 to .76 (self-enhancement) and from .67 to .84 (self-assessment) for the original version and .67–.84 and .61–.75, respectively for Polish adaptation.

Self-esteem was measured by the Self-Esteem Scale SES (Rosenberg, 1965) in Polish adaptation by Mariola Łaguna, Kinga Lachowicz-Tabaczek, and Irena Dzwonkowska (2007), consisting of 10 items measuring self-esteem as a stable personality characteristic (e.g. “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself”). Re-

spondent has to assess each item on a 4-point response scale (“strongly agree”, “agree”, “disagree”, “strongly disagree”). Cronbach’s α coefficient varied from .77 to -.88 for the original version and from .81 to -.83 for Polish adaptation.

Agreeableness and emotional stability were measured by the corresponding 2-item subscales of the brief measure of the Big Five personality traits (Costa, McCrae, 2003), i.e. the Ten Items Personality Inventory TIPI (Gosling, Rentfrow, Swann, 2003) in Polish adaptation by Agnieszka Sorokowska, Anita Zbieg, and Piotr Sorokowski (2014). Exemplary item is “I see myself as sympathetic, warm” and the response scale varies from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). Reliability coefficients for the original version were: .40 (agreeableness) and .83 (emotional stability), while for Polish adaptation they were .54 and .73, respectively.

The order in which the measures were presented to the participants was as follows: SMI, SES, Task 1: “The case of NOT MY victim” (condition: “Severe” or “Trifling” offense), TIPI(PL), Task 2: “The case of MY victim” (condition: the same as in Task 1). Response surface analyses were calculated with the use of R RSA package (Schönbrodt, 2018) and R syntax (Barranti, Carlson, Cote, 2017 – supplemental materials).

RESULTS

Despite disproportions in the number of females and males in both experimental groups, men and women did not differ significantly in the measured variables, with the only exception of emotional stability ($t(92) = -1.74, p < .05$), significantly higher in men ($M = 7.87, SD = 4.33$) than in women ($M = 6.18; SD = 3.27$) from the “Severe Offense” condition. This result is in line with a broad research on neuroticism, often showing higher neuroticism in women than in men (McCrae, Costa, 2003; Sorokowska, Zbieg, Sorokowski, 2014).

According to the statistics presented in Table 2, the victim’s sadness was judged higher in “Severe” offence condition, as compared to “Trifling” offence condition. However, there were no significant differences between the judgements of the victim’s hostility in “Severe” and “Trifling” offence conditions. What is more, in the experimental group considering “Severe” offense, hostility and sadness were judged higher in “My victim” condition, as compared to “Not my victim” condition. However, results were less consistent in the experimental group considering “Trifling” offense: the sadness of “My victim” was judged lower than the sadness of “Not my victim”, but there was also a statistical tendency that the hostility of “My victim” was judged higher than the hostility of “Not my victim”.

Response surface analysis (RSA) was used to test (for “Severe” and “Trifling” offenses separately) how is the (in)convergence of one’s judgements of emotional consequences (i.e. sadness/hostility) in one’s own victim and in someone else’s victim related to such aspects of one’s self as: self-enhancement mo-

Table 2. Means, standards deviations, t-tests, effect sizes and reliability coefficients for all measurements

Measurements	Severe offense (N = 94)				Trifling offense (N = 77)				t_{is} (df)	ES
	r.c.	M (SD)	t_{ds} (df)	ES	r.c.	M (SD)	t_{ds} (df)	ES		
Judged hostility of...										
...NOT MY victim	.57	10.60 (2.48)	-4.84*** (93)	-.48	.58	11.06 (2.19)	-1.97 [†] (76)	-.21	-1.30 (169)	-
...MY victim	.50	11.74 (2.25)			.69	11.55 (2.46)			.55 (169)	-
Judged sadness of...										
...NOT MY victim	.57	11.76 (2.13)	-2.61* (93)	-.30	.68	7.95 (2.64)	2.17* (76)	.20	10.22*** (144.90)	1.59
...MY victim	.27	12.33 (1.62)			.69	7.42 (2.67)			14.14*** (119.89)	2.22
Self-related variables:										
Self-enhancement	.70	5.37 (1.40)	-	-	.59	5.46 (1.44)	-	-	-.41 (169)	-
Self-assessment	.74	5.70 (1.29)	-	-	.58	5.89 (1.14)	-	-	-1.0 (169)	-
Self-esteem	.90	26.64 (5.68)	-	-	.89	26.56 (5.78)	-	-	.091 (169)	-
Agreeableness	.50	10.02 (2.67)	-	-	.60	10.03 (2.53)	-	-	-.01 (169)	-
Emotional stability	.82	6.45 (3.49)	-	-	.67	5.97 (3.53)	-	-	.88 (169)	-

r.c. – reliability coefficient: Cronbach’s α coefficient for hostility and sadness and Spearman-Brown split-half coefficient for the rest of measurements; ES – effect size coefficient: Hedges’s g for dependent samples and Cohen’s d for independent samples; t_{ds} – t -test for equality of means for dependent samples; t_{is} – t -test for equality of means for independent samples; M – mean; SD – standard deviation; df – degrees of freedom;

*** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$, [†] $p < .06$

Source: Authors’ own study.

tive, self-assessment motive, self-esteem, agreeableness and emotional stability. (Mis)matches in the judgements of sadness had no significant relationships with the above-mentioned aspects of the self, both in “Severe” and “Trifling” offense conditions. As regards (mis)matches in the judgements of hostility and their relations to the self, three models proved to be relevant. In “Trifling” offense condition, different patterns of (in)congruence between the judgements of hostility

were predicted by self-enhancement ($R^2 = .19, p < .05$) and self-assessment ($R^2 = .28, p < .001$). Visualizations of these results are presented in Figures 1 and 2, respectively. As regards “Severe” offense condition, different patterns of (in)congruence between the judgements of hostility were predicted by self-esteem ($R^2 = .13, p < .05$). The visualization of this finding is depicted in Figure 3.

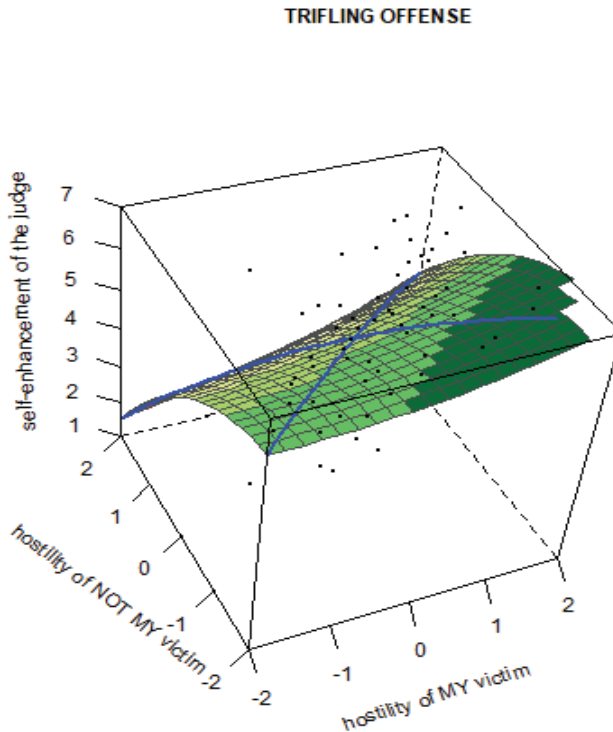


Figure 1. Response surface for (dis)similarities in the judgements of the victim’s hostility in trifling offense condition – relationships with self-enhancement. The polynomial coefficients were as follows: $b_0 = 5.34$, 95% confidence interval (CI) [4.94, 5.74]; $b_1 = .42$, 95% CI [-.02, .86]; $b_2 = -1.01$, 95% CI [-1.60, -.42]; $b_3 = .07$, 95% CI [-.18, .31]; $b_4 = .07$, 95% CI [-.40, .55]; $b_5 = -.23$ [-.62, .15].

Source: Authors’ own study.

Figures 1–3 present three different response surfaces drawn in analogous coordinate systems. Vertical (Z) axis represents particular self-related variable (e.g. self-enhancement). Both judgements of the victims’ hostility (horizontal axes X: “My Victim” and horizontal axis Y: “Not My Victim”) are centered on the midpoint (0) of the scales. Thick black line from point (X = -2, Y = -2, Z = ...) to point (X = 2, Y = 2, Z = ...) is the line of congruence, i.e. it reflects observations where value of X and value of Y perfectly match at all scale levels. Thick black line from point (X = 2, Y = -2, Z = ...) to point (X = -2, Y = 2, Z = ...) is the line of incongru-

ence, i.e. the line representing observations where values of X and Y are opposite (Barranti, Carlson, Cote, 2017; Miciuk, Dubas-Miciuk, in press).

As we can see in Figure 1 (“Trifling” offense), respondents who attributed high hostility to their own victim and low hostility to someone else’s victim had strong self-enhancement motive ($a_3 = 1.42$; 95% confidence interval [CI] = [.47, 2.38]). In turn, respondents who attributed higher hostility to both victims were characterized by medium levels of self-enhancement, while respondents who attributed lower hostility of both victims were characterized by higher levels of self-enhancement ($a_7 = -.59$; 95% [CI] = [-1.00, -.18]).

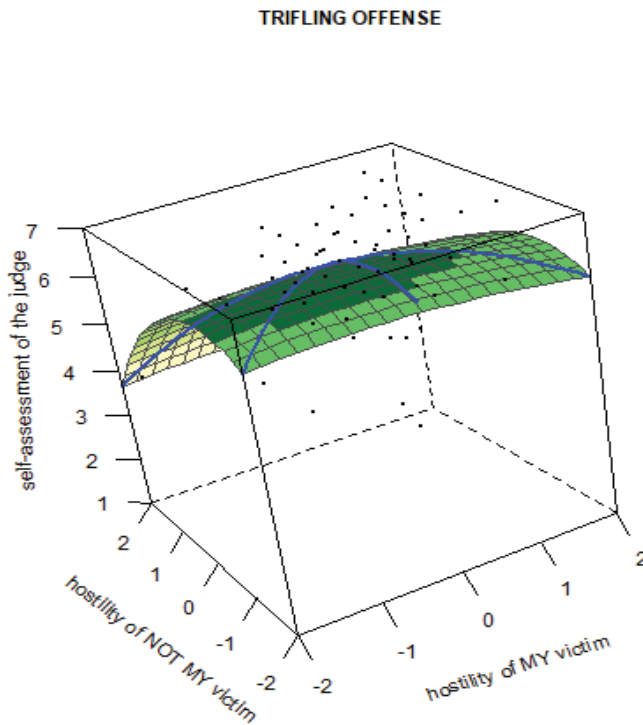


Figure 2. Response surface for (dis)similarities in the judgements of the victim’s hostility in trifling offense condition – relationships with self-assessment. The polynomial coefficients were as follows: $b_0 = 6.15$, 95% confidence interval (CI) [5.92, 6.38]; $b_1 = -.05$, 95% CI [-.26, .16]; $b_2 = -.59$, 95% CI [-.96, -.22]; $b_3 = -.05$, 95% CI [-.22, .13]; $b_4 = .01$, 95% CI [-.17, .18]; $b_5 = -.30$ [-.48, -.12].

Source: Authors’ own study.

Figure 2 (“Trifling” offense) presents more complex relationships. Firstly, it turned out that the bigger the discrepancy between hostility attributed to “my” and “not my” victim, the lower the intensity of self-assessment motive in the assessor, i.e. the smaller his/her motivation to know the truth about himself/herself ($a_4 =$

-.36; 95% [CI] = [-.63, -.08]). Secondly, self-assessment motive was higher in participants who attributed higher hostility to their own victim and smaller hostility to someone else's victim and, reversely, self-assessment motive was lower in participants who attributed higher hostility to someone else's victim and lower hostility to their own victim ($a_3 = .54$; 95% [CI] = [.14, .92]). Thirdly, participants who attributed lower hostility to both their own victim and someone else's victim were higher in self-assessment, while participants who attributed higher hostility to both victims were significantly lower in self-assessment ($a_1 = -.64$; 95% [CI] = [-1.10, -.18]). Last but not least, self-assessment motive was the strongest in participants who attributed medium hostility to both victims, slightly weaker (but still strong) in participants who attributed low hostility to both victims, and average in participants who attributed high hostility to both victims ($a_2 = -.35$; 95% [CI] = [-.56, -.14]).

Unlike Figures 1 and 2, Figure 3 depicts relationships between variables in "Severe" offense condition. According to the results, the bigger the discrepancy

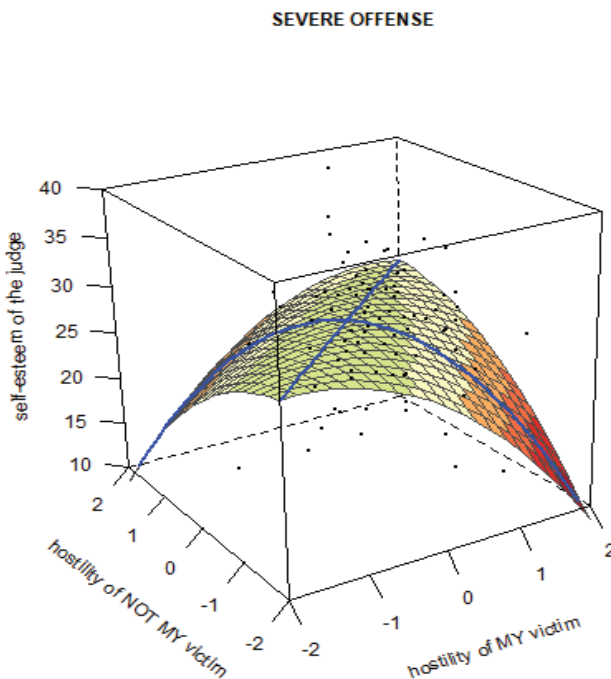


Figure 3. Response surface for (dis)similarities in the judgements of the victim's hostility in severe offense condition – relationships with self-esteem. The polynomial coefficients were as follows: $b_0 = 27.96$, 95% confidence interval (CI) [26.42, 29.50]; $b_1 = -.37$, 95% CI [-2.25, 1.50]; $b_2 = -.43$, 95% CI [-2.50, 1.64]; $b_3 = -1.43$, 95% CI [-2.54, -0.32]; $b_4 = 2.43$, 95% CI [0.29, 4.57]; $b_5 = -1.02$ [-2.24, .20].

Source: Authors' own study.

between the levels of hostility attributed to “my” and “not my” victim (regardless of which victim was attributed to higher, and which victim to lower hostility), the lower level of self-esteem in the assessor. In other words, the higher self-esteem of the assessor, the bigger congruence of the hostility levels attributed to his/her own victim and someone else’s victim ($a_4 = -4.89$; 95% [CI] = [-8.84, -.92]).

DISCUSSION

The first research question (Q1) concerned the impact of the severity of the offense on the judgement of the victim’s hostility and sadness. It was postulated (H1) that the judgements would be higher for severe offense and lower for trifling offense. Based on the results, the judgement of the victim’s hostility does not depend on the severity of the offense, while the judgement of the victim’s sadness does depend (sadness was judged as more intensely experienced by the victims of severe offense, as compared to the victims of trifling offense). This means that H1 was confirmed for sadness but not for hostility. This may be because of the nature of situations described in the short-stories presented to the participants (go back to Table 1 for the details). Perhaps hostility towards the perpetrator is an emotion equally suitable to the situations of a serious health damage and a pilfering, irrespective of in which of these situations this emotion appears faster and in which later and how long it lasts. Sadness, on the other hand, may suit better to a long-lasting suffering than to a single episodic theft of low financial loss. Although H1 has not been fully confirmed, logically explainable mean values of hostility and sadness in the conditions of severe and trifling offenses speak for the validity of their measurements.

The second research question (Q2) concerned the impact of the identity (i.e. me/not me) of the perpetrator on his/her judgement of the victim’s negative emotions (i.e. hostility and sadness) in both offense conditions (i.e. severe and trifling). Despite one exception (judgments of sadness in trifling offense condition), participants judged higher sadness and hostility of their own victim as compared to someone else’s victim, which means that, in general, H2 postulating that people would attribute lower negative emotional states to their own victim than to someone else’s victim was refuted. According to the findings, involvement of the self in the imagined offense in the role of the perpetrator indeed changes one’s perspective when judging the victim’s emotional states, however it looks like that in this particular case it is rather not due to self-enhancement motive. One possible explanation is that perhaps the judgements of the victim’s emotional states are in fact the mirrors of the judge’s own emotional reactions to the short-stories presented to them. Judges imagining themselves as behaving in an irresponsible way which was harmful to other people (especially if it concerned a serious health damage) could experience feelings of guilt, self-blame and fear caused by the expected le-

gal and social consequences of the offense. Therefore, their own negative affect could be to some extent transferred to their own (but not someone else's) victim. On the contrary, a minor theft of bars and rolls (trifling offense condition) could probably be seen as more cunning than harmful to another person, allowing the activation of self-enhancement motive when judging sadness of one's own victim and someone else's victim.

More nuanced and complex patterns of relationships between the variables were revealed in the response surface analyses. All significant models concerned the judgements of hostility. As regards trifling offense condition, (mis)matches of judgements were related to self-enhancement and self-assessment motives. What is interesting, there were two types of people high in self-enhancement: (1) these attributing low hostility to both their own victim and someone else's victim and (2) those attributing high hostility to their own victim and low hostility to someone else's victim (Figure 1). When considering the first type of self-enhancing participants, it is worth to look at the order of the tasks. The participants were first judging hostility of someone else's victim and after that they were judging hostility of their own victim. If they considered the situation of a minor theft as not very harmful by nature, they first attributed low hostility to the victim of someone else's theft. Afterwards, being asked to imagine themselves committing analogous misdemeanor, the only thing they could do was attribute low hostility to their own victim as well. Perhaps due to strong self-enhancement motive they had the urge to attribute even lower level of hostility to their own victim, but it was impossible since they had already marked the lowest scale values when judging someone else's victim. If so, they wanted, at least, to protect themselves (Alicke, Sedikides, 2009) by maintaining equally positive self-view as the view of someone else committing similar offense (just to avoid being "the worse"). Why, however, some people high in self-enhancement attributed high hostility to their own victim and low hostility to someone else's victim? Intuitively, they should do the opposite to play down negative outcomes of their own immoral behavior. However, stealing several bars or rolls is not a heavy crime, so predicting high hostility of any victim of such a theft seems quite unreasonable. Therefore, the emerging question is: is being a stealer of rolls actually threatening for the self-concept of a self-enhancing person? Perhaps, leaving the bakery with stolen rolls without being caught may bring a feeling of "wild satisfaction", especially if the victim of such "innocent" theft is seriously annoyed and feels higher hostility towards the perpetrator. In other words, the results suggest that minor immoral acts may be a means of self-promotion, i.e. they may play up positive attributes of a self-enhancing person ("I did it! I am so cunning!"). Surprisingly, however, the participants low in self-enhancement attributed low hostility to their own victim and high hostility to someone else's victim. This finding is quite difficult to explain. It should be noted that in general it is not common to have low level of self-enhancement, which

has proved to be a cardinal, strong self-motive of the majority of people (Dufner, Gebauer, Sedikides, Denissen, 2019). Very low level of self-enhancement may be indicative for the people self-verifying negative self-views, as well as for the individuals suffering from depression (Alloy, Wagner, Black, Gerstein, Abramson, 2011). Such people, however, should rather attribute higher hostility to their own victim (thereby increasing the seriousness of their offense) in order to maintain their self-concept of being a “bad” person, but in this study was it was the other way round. Perhaps this unexpected result may be explained the nature of the items used to measure self-enhancement in this study (i.e. “In general, I LIKE to hear that I am a GREAT person” and “In general, I WANT to discover that I have EXCELLENT qualities”). It is possible that such items may cause defensive reactions in people who are modest (or want to be considered modest because of the need for social approval). On the other hand, people who actually love to listen to superlatives about themselves may want to disguise such inglorious inclination, so as not to be accused of being a buffoon. This would mean that among people with low results in self-enhancement measured by the Self-Motive Items SMI (Gregg, Hepper, Sedikides, 2011) there could be people with medium or even high levels of self-enhancement. This issue requires a future in-depth examination in a specially designed research since it questions the validity of measurement of self-enhancement motive via the SMI.

Self-assessment motive was another predictor of (in)convergence between the judgements of victims’ hostility in trifling offense condition. It must be underlined that self-assessment had negative skewed distribution in this research sample and therefore response surface analysis could not provide data about the answers provided by people low in this motive (see Figure 2). According to the results, the urge to know the truth about one’s self was the strongest in respondents who attributed medium hostility to both their own victim and someone else’s victim, still strong in respondents who attributed low hostility to both victims and medium in respondents who attributed high hostility to both victims. These findings are easy to understand if we realize that people may differently perceive the harmfulness of a minor theft. Some of participants could think that stealing several low-cost bars or rolls does not threaten economic status of the victim and therefore it should not trigger his/her hostility towards the stealer. Other respondents could notice, however, that even a minor theft may be annoying for the lossy victim and, therefore, some dose of hostility (i.e. medium or even high) towards the thief is quite probable. This or that perception of a minor theft may depend on the person’s cognitive skills, for example on the level of *integrative complexity*, i.e. the ability to see different points of view and combine them into the understandable whole (Suedfeld, Tetlock, 1977; Brodbeck, Kugler, Fischer, Heinze, Fischer, 2020). Anyway, the point is that in this study a high level of self-assessment was related to equal standards when judging hostility of one’s own victim and someone else’s victim. In turn, double standards were asso-

ciated with lower level of self-assessment, especially if respondent attributed higher hostility to someone else's victim than to his/her own victim. These findings may be considered as another proof that people high in self-assessment actually look for the truthful information (Gregg, Hepper, Sedikides, 2011). The results also showed that some participants high in self-assessment attributed higher hostility to their own victim as compared to someone else's victim. Perhaps this result refers to the restrictive side of self-assessment, i.e. a person who wants to be truthful in perceiving oneself may expect more good and morality from oneself, and therefore has a tendency to perceive the consequences of his/her own negative behaviors as much more serious than negative consequences of analogous deeds of other people. What is more important, self-assessment motive was lower in participants who judged higher hostility in someone else's victim and lower in their own victim. It is worth recalling that identical pattern of double standards was related to high self-enhancement, which advocates the inter-consistency of the results.

As regards severe offense condition, it was not self-motives but self-esteem that proved to be useful in explaining equal and double standards in judging the hostility of one's own victim and someone else's victim. Perhaps this was due to the fact that attempting to deny the negative consequences of such a severe offense as causing permanent physical disability to another person is associated with more solid foundations in personality, as compared to self-motives being triggered and changeable due to various situational stimuli (self-esteem, in contrast to self-enhancement and self-assessment motives, has a solid grounding in personality, both innate and learned (Harter, 1993). As Figure 3 shows, participants having low self-esteem used double standards in their judgements, regardless of whose hostility was judged higher and whose hostility was judged lower. Higher hostility attributed to one's own victim of severe offense may be a direct consequence of low self-esteem ("I did something really wrong, I am a bad person!") whilst lower hostility attributed to one's own victim may be the example of defensive self-esteem strengthening (compare: Haddock, Gebauer, 2011). Most importantly, high self-esteem of the judge was related to equal standards in judging hostility of both victims.

To sum up, equal and double standards in judging hostility in one's own and someone else's victims were predicted by one's self-enhancement and self-assessment in trifling offense condition and by one's self-esteem in severe offense condition. In turn, (in)congruence between the judgements of victims' sadness was not significantly related to any aspects of the self investigated in this study. Perhaps sadness, appearing to a greater or lesser extent among victims of trifling and severe offenses, is something so obvious that people can assess it regardless of how much motivated they are to learn the truth about themselves, and at the same time, sadness is presumably something not threatening (or rewarding!) enough to affect positive self-image of the self-enhancing perpetrator. Attention must be paid to the low reliability of one of the measurements of sadness (go back to Ta-

ble 2) which may partly explain (mis)matches in sadness having no significant relationships aspects of the self in “Severe” offense condition. Another limitation of the study concerns the instruction to imagine being a perpetrator of the offense described in a short-story. It is in fact a mild form of experimental manipulation which could not work for some (less vulnerable) participants. To our knowledge, our study was so far the first in which the response surface analysis has been used in order to determine predictors of equal and double standards in judging emotional consequences in victims suffering from major and minor offenses. Before generalizing the results, this study requires replication with the use of improved operationalizations of the variables. Most of all, non-self-report measures of self-motives are highly recommended.

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STRESZCZENIE

Rola emocji w ludzkiej moralności jest podkreślana przez wielu neuronaukowców i filozofów. Z psychologicznego punktu widzenia rozwiązywanie dylematów moralnych jest niemożliwe w oderwaniu od procesów poznawczo-emocjonalnych związanych z Ja. Niniejsze badanie miało na celu przetestowanie czynników związanych z Ja, potencjalnie wyjaśniających rozbieżności w zakresie szacowanych poziomów wrogości i smutku doświadczanych przez ofiary poważnych przestępstw i drobnych wykroczeń, w których wyobrazonym sprawcą była osoba dokonująca szacowania lub jakaś inna osoba. Badanie przeprowadzono w paradygmatach eksperymentalnym i korelacyjnym, przy czym kluczową metodą analizy danych była analiza powierzchni odpowiedzi (RSA). Przebadano 171 osób za pomocą takich kwestionariuszy, jak: Skala Motywów Autoewaluacyjnych (SMA), Skala Samooceny Rosenberga (SES), Polska Adaptacja testu *Ten Items Personality Inventory* (TIPI-PL) oraz Skala Pozytywnego i Negatywnego Afektu – Wersja Rozszerzona (PANAS-X). Okazało się, że samoocena była predyktorem (nie)zgodności poziomów wrogości przypisywanych ofiarom poważnych przestępstw, podczas gdy motywy autowaloryzacji i samopoznania przewidywały określone wzorce (ro)zbieżności poziomów wrogości przypisywanych ofiarom drobnych wykroczeń. Dyskusja wyników dotyczy m.in. znaczenia perspektywy Ja dla skutecznego rozpoznawania stanów emocjonalnych innych ludzi.

Słowa kluczowe: wrogość; ofiara; autowaloryzacja; samoocena; analiza powierzchni odpowiedzi