

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE

One of the most robust findings in social cognition has to do with the impressive range of asymmetries that seems to exist in how we perceive others versus how we perceive ourselves. These differences seem to reflect basic differences in how we treat information about ourselves versus about other people. The fields in which self-other asymmetries have been studied include, among others, causal attribution, stereotypes, risk perception, person and group perception, self-perception, and the evaluation of one's own and other people's performances. Unfortunately, research dealing with perceived self-other asymmetries has been scattered across different fields of (social) psychology. Given that we believe that the development of a unified theory of self-other asymmetries might profit from a greater empirical and theoretical coherence, the main aim of this Special Issue is to help advance the field towards such an integration by bringing together contributions on different self-other asymmetries in social cognition.

The issue opens with a brief conceptual overview of a variety of self-other asymmetries that have been identified thus far, thus offering some background to the subsequent articles (Hoorens & Desrichard). One theme that emerges from this overview is that people tend to exaggerate self-other similarities and self-other differences at the same time. Therefore, one contribution has been included that focuses on social projection and the perception of self-other similarities (Krueger) while two other contributions examine the generality and the origins of perceived self-other differences in performance and ability (Klein & Buckingham) and future expectations (Shepperd, Carroll, Grace, & Terry), respectively. To illustrate these self-other asymmetries, two short empirical articles are included that offer a demonstration of illusory superiority and false consensus. More specifically, the former article focuses on the tendency to believe that one is less racially prejudiced than others (Saucier) while the latter focuses on the tendency to project one's own habits onto others, even if information about these others' actual habits is readily available (Hodge, Johnsen, & Scott).

One reason why people believe that they are different from others may be that they explain their own behaviours and other people's behaviours in different ways. The latter assumption has been at the heart of research on actor-observer differences in causal attribution. A critical analysis and a reinterpretation of this "classic" line of research in social cognition is therefore included (Knobe & Malle).

As self-other asymmetries may affect people's social and individual behaviour, they are not just relevant from a theoretical point of view but also

because of their potential consequences for people's well-being, mental health, social relationships, and instrumental behaviours. For the last fifteen years, the question if self-other asymmetries are beneficial versus harmful has been and continues to be a hot topic. Although many researchers have elaborated on the consequences of the belief that one is superior to others within the context of self-other asymmetries, relatively little work has been done on the consequences of the belief that one is inferior to others. Suggesting a bridge between research on the effects of interpersonal and intergroup social comparison, the last empirical contribution focuses on the effects of upward intergroup comparison on individuals' self-esteem (Martinot & Redersdorff).

Vera Hoorens and Olivier Desrichard