

The contributions included in this special issue highlight the fertility of this research field. In fact, in the reported articles: dehumanization is analyzed in relation to crucial social problems, such as ostracism, prejudice, women's and workers' objectification; new theoretical models are proposed aiming at explaining the different forms of dehumanization; strategies capable of improving outgroup humanization are discussed.

In their contribution, Bastian and Crimston review a set of studies demonstrating self-dehumanization effects. For instance, both individuals who are ostracized and perpetrators of ostracism evaluate themselves as less than human. The aversive consequences of self-dehumanization on cognitions, emotions, and behavior are described. We are convinced that self-dehumanization, studied in different social settings, such as health-care institutions and schools, will attract the interest of many investigators working in this research field.

Waytz and Schroeder, in a novel theoretical contribution, classify all the forms of dehumanization into two categories. One is dehumanization by commission, including active and aggressive forms of dehumanization; the other is dehumanization by omission, based on a passive process whereby people overlook or fail to recognize human mental capacities in others. Both acts of commission and acts of omission can result in high levels of harm for the target. In fact, in its extreme forms, dehumanization by commission may lead to slavery and genocides, while dehumanization by omission may lead to experiences of loneliness and exclusion with grave effects on physical and psychological health.

Theory and research have distinguished between different types of human attributes. In their paper, Li, Leidner, and Castano provide a taxonomy of dehumanization phenomena and episodes, grounded on two dimensions. One dimension concerns agency, competence, and other uniquely human characteristics; the other concerns experience, warmth, and other human nature traits. On the basis of this integrative model, four main clusters are described, representing different ways in which humanness is recognized or denied.

Hodson, Kteily, and Hoffarth consider two factors which can play a meaningful role in explaining dehumanization and prejudice: the human-animal divide, namely the belief that humans are different and superior to other animals, and intergroup disgust, that is, the revulsion felt toward certain groups. Research findings show that both factors are associated with prejudice and dehumanization. Knowing the different antecedents of dehumanization allows us to be more effective in curb-

ing its detrimental consequences. Taking a different position, Wilde, Martin, and Goff argue that prejudice and dehumanization are distinct phenomena, having distinct causes and distinct effects.

Scholars in different disciplines have argued that people are sometimes perceived as objects. The paper by Loughnan and Pacilli focuses on sexual objectification. These authors consider the analyses conducted by different investigators, finding that objectification changes both the ways people are viewed and the ways they are treated. Furthermore, the authors examine who is the target of objectification, who is likely to objectify, and the consequences of being objectified. Baldissarri, Andrighetto, and Volpato propose a different type of objectification, namely objectification in the work-place. When objectified in the work environment, a person is judged for his/her usefulness, and perceived as a tool for one's goals. The paper analyzes the consequences of being objectified in a real work setting, finding a decrease in self-attribution of human mental states.

Another research contribution has been proposed by Leyens, Cortes, Collange, and de Renesse. In a set of five studies, these authors found a new interesting effect: the more negative uniquely human emotions participants attributed to the outgroup, the better they felt; the more positive uniquely human emotions they attributed to the outgroup, the worse they felt. Findings are discussed in the light of Schadenfreude literature.

In research, little attention has been paid to the problem of how dehumanizing perceptions can be reduced. In their article, Capozza, Falvo, Di Bernardo, Vezali, and Visintin review the studies that investigate whether intergroup contact may be related to more favorable humanity perceptions. The association between contact and outgroup humanization is supported by a set of studies in which different types of contact and different research designs are used.

All the contributions reported in this special issue show how crucial this research field is to fully understand human social behavior. The ultimate goal is that of improving, through relevant interventions, intergroup relations and individual well-being.