

After a long period in which the study of intergroup relations mainly focused on cognitive, evaluative, and motivational aspects, in the last years a progressively wide attention has been dedicated to the role of intergroup emotions. Intergroup emotions can be defined as affective states (a) felt by individuals who perceive themselves as members of a group, and (b) experienced toward a whole social category or toward group members. Several studies have demonstrated that intergroup emotions – e.g. fear, anger, anxiety, trust, empathy or threat – play an important role in intergroup relations, being closely related to aversive phenomena such as prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination.

This special issue concerns different intergroup emotions felt in different settings, for instance in situations of imagined or real contact with members of other groups, when one's own mortality is salient, in episodes of misfortune of the out-group.

The contribution by *Spears* is focused on *schadenfreude*, namely the malicious pleasure which may derive from another person's failures. In three experiments, the Author demonstrates that *schadenfreude* also concerns the realm of inter-gender relationships. Actually, both female and male participants showed higher levels of this emotion toward a candidate of the other gender who had received preferential treatment (business environment), but was subsequently resigned. Male participants exhibited *schadenfreude* toward women even when women's failures regarded driving abilities, a dimension on which men feel superior to women. The reported research generally demonstrates greater *schadenfreude* toward other-gender than same-gender targets.

*Pyszczynski's* article reviews research on the implication of terror management theory for understanding political violence and ideological conflicts. The reviewed literature shows that political ideology is an important aspect of the cultural worldview upon which people rely for protection from deep existential fears. Effective politicians often intuitively use persuasive tactics that are rooted in an implicit understanding of the psychological effects of existential threat. Thus, voting public has to be immunized against these fear manipulations that are often a core feature of political persuasion.

*Kenworthy, Myers, Coursey, Popan, and Hewstone* examined, in the context of Northern Ireland, the role of trust or distrust toward religious outgroups. In particular, in two experiments, the Authors presented Catholic and Protestant participants with a scenario in which a Northern Ireland community leader extended trust

or distrust to the religious outgroup, assessing the effects of this variable on a wide range of dependent variables, such as group-level emotions and expected negative intergroup relations. They found that it was the extension of distrust which negatively influenced intergroup perceptions. Furthermore, ingroup identification played an important moderation role.

Research has widely demonstrated that contact between members of different groups is one of the most effective strategies to reduce prejudice and ameliorate intergroup relations. Different forms of contact have been investigated; recent studies have provided consistent support for imagined contact, an indirect form of contact which can be easily implemented, and is particularly useful in segregation contexts. In a review of more than 20 studies, *Vezzali, Crisp, Stathi, and Giovannini* investigate the affective consequences of imagined contact. The studies reviewed indicate that imagined contact is effective at both alleviating intergroup anxiety and enhancing positive intergroup emotions, such as empathy and trust, with the consequence of preparing people for friendly real contact experiences. Authors suggest that social psychologists and practitioners may fruitfully capitalize on the cognitive and affective nature of imagined contact, and base their future studies and interventions on both components of the imagination process.

*Pagotto and Voci* investigate another form of indirect contact, namely mass-mediated, vicarious contact. It has actually been found that observing positive encounters between ingroup and outgroup members in television or videos, or listening to radio soap operas improves attitudes toward the other group. In the reported study, the Authors examine the effects on prejudice of positive and negative episodes of direct and mass-mediated contact. The outgroup was the general category of immigrants. Findings show that the beneficial effects of positive face-to-face interactions are counteracted by negative contact through mass-media, in particular TV news. Interestingly, contact effects were mediated by the emotions of anxiety, empathy, and trust.

These three emotions turn out to be key-mediators of contact effects also when cross-group friendships and extended contact are involved (in extended contact, a person knows that an ingroup member has a close relationship with outgroup members). In a study, in which the relationship between Northern and Southern Italians was investigated, *Capozza, Falvo, Favara, and Trifiletti* test a model which broadens Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, and Ropp (1997) conceptualization of extended contact. Findings support the model proposed and show that both cognitive and affective factors mediate the relationship between extended contact and the outcome, which in this study is outgroup humanization.

Altogether, this special issue, showing the crucial role emotions play in intergroup relationships, is fundamental for future studies aimed at predicting and ameliorating intergroup attitudes and behaviors.