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## Invited Editors' Note for the Special Issue in honor of Lucia Mannetti on: "Reactions to uncertainty"

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Dynamism of modernity, technological advances, economic and geopolitical shocks, migratory flows, pandemics, climate and energy crises, and any number of novel or unanticipated events that can happen in an individual's life have one thing in common: they represent sources of uncertainty the reactions to which may vary from individual to individual, and from situation to situation. Some individuals feel confused and anxious under uncertain circumstances while others react to them with hope and excitement.

Diverse research programs in several areas of psychology have mostly highlighted the negative side of uncertainty and emphasized the human tendency to avoid uncertainty, seek cognitive closure, crave security, and compensate for the aversive and discomfort state associated with uncertainty in different ways (e.g., Frenkel-Brunswick, 1948; Hofstede, 2001; Hogg, 2012; Kruglanski, 2004).

Lucia Mannetti to whom this special issue is dedicated, in her work on the need for cognitive closure contributed substantially to understanding people's desire for certainty and their eschewal of unpredictability (see e.g., De Grada et al., 1999; Mannetti et al., 2002, 2007, 2010; Pierro et al., 2003; Chirumbolo et al., 2004; Kosic et al., 2004; Kruglanski et al., 2006; Livi et al., 2015; Brizi et al., 2016).

Yet despite the general interest in psychology on the aversive aspects of uncertainty, several research paradigms attest to approach rather than avoidance of uncertain situations, and highlight people's positive feelings about novel and uncertain situations (for instance research on creativity: Sternberg & Kaufman, 2010; sensation seeking: Zuckerman, 2009; and curiosity and exploration: Szumowska & Kruglanski, 2020; see for review, Kruglanski et al., 2023). It follows that uncertainty is neither necessarily "bad", or experienced as aversive, nor "good", or experienced as pleasant or exciting.

Honoring Lucia Mannetti's contributions to the topic of uncertainty, and in light of the pervasiveness of uncertainty in people's lives, we are presenting here a special issue on reactions to uncertainty as these have been addressed in 14 contributions included in it and aimed at identifying and analyzing (1) the factors (chronic and situational) that underlie the contrasting reactions to novel, uncertain and threatening situations, (2) implications and consequences of these reactions at individual, group and societal levels, and (3) the potential resources (personal, interpersonal and societal) for coping with significant uncertain situations.

We are excited about the opportunity this initiative has offered us to express our deep thanks for Lucia's tireless and prolific academic work, and to bring together diverse ways of thinking about uncertainty and explore its different facets. We are equally deeply grateful to Lucia's friends, colleagues and students who contributed to the realization of this special issue which we briefly present below.

Three contributions in this issue (articles 3, 4, 6) discuss the dynamics associated with (positive and negative) reactions to conditions of uncertainty through the lens of different theoretical perspectives.

Specifically, the contribution of Kruglanski, Ellenberg, Contu & Pierro (article 3 in this issue) describes and provides empirical support for a novel theory of (positive and negative) affective reactions to uncertain situations. The theory holds that people's past experiences, both long- and short-term, inform their expectations for future outcomes, particularly when the specific outcomes in a situation are unknown.

In their article, Pantaleo & Sciarra (article 4 in this issue) explore the dynamics of reactions to uncertainty through the lens of a theory of orienting vs. multiple perspectives. In offering real-life examples of contrasting opinions and points of view on different topics, each rooted in different psychological perspectives, the authors illustrate how contrasting multiplicity of viewpoints can give rise to both 'disturbing' vs. 'appealing' uncertainty.

In his article (article 6 in this issue), Hogg discusses uncertainty and self-uncertainty and their motivational role in human behavior, then focuses on uncertainty-identity theory's core tenet – that group identification, particularly with highly entitative groups and their distinctive social identities, is a particularly effective way to reduce self-uncertainty.

For over four decades, the need for cognitive closure, NFCC (i.e., the desire for stable and certain knowledge), has played a pivotal role in research programs addressing its impact at individual, group and societal levels. Four contributions in this special issue (article 1, 2, 5, 14) pertain to efforts to expand this research tradition.

In their paper, Kossowska, Szumowska, Szwed, and Czernatowicz-Kukuczka (article 1 in this issue) delve into the connection between uncertainty, particularly as it manifests in the need for cognitive closure, and its influence on cognitive functioning, social perspectives, and ideologies. Additionally, they incorporate empirical findings demonstrating that the experience of uncertainty does not always lead to simplistic and biased information processing; they underscore instances where individuals, driven by a desire for certainty, engage in nuanced, contemplative, and receptive information processing.

In the study presented by Marini, Parrisè, Prislei, and Livi (article 2 in this issue), investigating the relationships between Need for Cognitive Closure, academic motivation and performance in a group of secondary school students, results revealed that students who are driven by the need for certainty in academic outcomes are more motivated to avoid rather than actively pursue educational goals.

The current work of Baldner and Pierro (article 5 in this issue) follows up on the research tradition on the role played by the need for cognitive closure in the emergence of a behavioral syndrome describable as group-centrism (Kruglanski et al., 2006) by systematically reviewing and meta-analyzing the relationship between the need for cognitive closure and the binding moral foundations (purity, authority, and ingroup loyalty), an aspect of group-centrism rooted in the need for groups to promote order and cohesion, and thus a shared reality among group members.

In two cross-sectional datasets collected in Italy one year apart, Molinaro, Di Cicco, Prislei, and Sensales (article 14 in this issue) tested the indirect effect of different kinds of threats (i.e., threats related to COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine Conflict) on populist attitudes through Need for Cognitive

Closure. They found that both the perceived threat posed by COVID-19 and the threat posed by the Russia-Ukraine Conflict was positively related to NFCC, which in turn was positively related to high levels of populist attitudes.

As anticipated above, unexpected events and crises such as international conflicts, pandemics, migratory flows, sudden illnesses, etc., represent sources of uncertainty that can trigger aversive and discomfort states in different ways and that can lead to embracing attitudes, beliefs, ideologies of a certain type, including populist and conspiracy ones. It is therefore mandatory to identify the potential resources (personal, interpersonal and societal) for coping with significant uncertain situations and explore the dynamics connected to the endorsement of attitudes, beliefs, worldviews, and ideologies of a certain type. The subsequent contributions in this issue fulfill, at least in part, this function.

Kosic and Ai (article 7 in this issue) present two studies conducted in Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic. In both studies they explored whether perceived spiritual support moderated the relationships between COVID-19 induced concerns and psychological distress. They hypothesized and found that belief in a spiritual protective power have a beneficial effect during unpredictable and uncontrollable circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The paper of Biraglia and Metastasio (article 13 in this issue) focused on individuals' reactions to advertising messages during a health-related crisis like the one triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of a preliminary study conducted with real advertising campaigns during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic show how individuals react more positively to an advert constructed on a proactive message (aimed at empowering the individual) than a preventive message (aimed at protecting the individual).

The study presented by Bernuzzi, Svanella, and Setti (article 8 in this issue), conducted on a sample of volunteers engaged in the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis and aimed at verifying the protective role of mindfulness, reveals that mindfulness was negatively related to emotional exhaustion and post-traumatic stress, both directly and indirectly through the mediation of intolerance of uncertainty.

The study presented by Kosic, Leder, and Pica (article 11 in this issue) examines the extent to which immigrants in the UK regret their decision to emigrate in relation to: 1) social comparisons with co-nationals in the country of origin; 2) perceptions of discrimination in the host country; 3) the feeling of uncertainty; and 4) prevention and promotion regulatory focus.

The current study presented by Lauriola, Manunza, Mosca, and Trentini (article 9 in this issue) aims to explore attachment styles and reactions related to intolerance to uncertainty (IU). In general, they hypothesize and find that both anxious and avoidant attachments intensify IU beliefs and their maladaptive consequences. Conversely, the authors predict and verify that secure attachment correlates with lower IU levels, offering resilience against uncertainty distress.

The paper presented by Pellegrini, Leone, De Cristofaro, Salvati, and Giacomantonio (article 10 in this issue) explores the relationships among meaningfulness of the world, system justification, populist attitudes, and conspiracy beliefs. The

findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of how individual cognitions, system justification, political ideologies, and conspiracy beliefs intersect, suggesting a potential dual role of the meaningfulness of the world in shaping political attitudes and preference.

The contribution of Alby, Fatigante, and Zucchermaglio (article 12 in this issue) addresses the topic of how to manage uncertainty in oncology visits and communication practices with ethnically diverse patients in the Italian medical context. The authors, also through the presentation and qualitative analysis of specific cases, underline how the ongoing research in the field of communicating uncertain medical information underlines the delicate and multifaceted nature of this process. Doctors face several communicative challenges related to the balancing of transparency, patient-centered approaches, cultural sensitivity, and patients' involvement in treatment decision making processes.

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