



UNIVERSITY
OF WARSAW

Faculty of Psychology



Warsaw, 10.09.2026

dr hab. Katarzyna Lubiewska, prof. UW
Faculty of Psychology
University of Warsaw
Warsaw

**Review of the doctoral dissertation of Emrullah Ecer, M.A.,
titled „Objectification and exchange orientation as results of attachment insecurity.
Exploration of the relation and its psychological mechanisms”**

The doctoral dissertation explores the topic of dynamics of attachment strategies analyzed from an angle of a quality of social interactions. My review of the presented set of works consists of four parts. First, I will summarize formally aspects of the dissertation content. Next, I will summarize papers and studies subjected to the review. This part will be followed by general discussion on the contribution of the dissertation to psychological science, including strong and, in my opinion, relatively weaker aspects of the work. In the last part I will summarize my review with formal conclusions and recommendations (in the Polish language).

Formal summary of the dissertation structure and the Author's contribution:

The dissertation consists of the Author's summary of the contribution, two papers and one manuscript. Emrullah Ecer is the first author of two among the three presented papers with the contribution of 50% and 30%, and the second author in one paper with the contribution of 50%. Emrullah Ecer is the corresponding author in one of the two published papers which means that he is not the first nor corresponding author in one among three presented papers. His contribution was related to data curation, conceptualization, methodology and data analysis, writing and visualization of results, as well as discussion of findings. Funding acquisition for the data collection and projects realization was provided by another coauthor of papers who served as the supervisor in the presented dissertation. Two papers were published in high impact factor journals (IF of 1.1 and 3.8). One of presented papers by Ecer & Gąsiorowska titled "From insecurity to instrumentality (...)" was included into the set of works submitted as the dissertation in the form of initial submission done in April 2026. As I could not find it searching online resources and the relevant information was not complemented before my review has been finalized, I am assuming that the paper has not been published yet.

Summary of the dissertation content:

The dissertation, as I understand it, aims to test relational strategies as the compensatory mechanisms which adult individuals adopt to manage different aspects of their social functioning geared by their own attachment insecurity aspects. Abovementioned relational strategies are narrowed down to exchange orientation and interpersonal objectification, whereas attachment insecurity is analyzed through aspects of attachment anxiety and avoidance indicative for hyper- and deactivation of attachment behavioral strategies (respectively). This broad aim is approached

systematically in the three papers addressing the following narrow aims described in the Author's summary: (1) "Whether and why attachment insecurities predict multidimensional exchange orientation and general calculative mindset?"; (2) "Whether exchange orientation toward romantic partner mediates the relationship between attachment insecurities and interpersonal objectification?" (p. 16); and (3) "Whether attachment avoidance specifically predicts a chronic tendency to objectify others and [I guess it is the fourth aim] to identify the socio-cognitive mechanisms underlying this association" (related with ToM and empathy, which as I would add are most of all emotional aspects of human functioning) (p. 17). Summarizing, the broad model tested across the three papers aims to test associations between attachment anxiety and (in particular) avoidance and individual tendency to objectify others mediated or moderated by the four following tendencies used in social relations: exchange orientation tendency, calculative mind, (low competences regarding) theory of mind and empathy. These aims are achieved in the three papers presenting results of studies carried out with the participation of adult samples collected in different countries using quasi-longitudinal, cross-sectional, and experimental designs. One study analyzed longitudinal data collected with one year lag between sampling waves in UK, other data were collected from different samples with one exception where data from the same sample were analyzed in Paper 2 (Study 1) and Paper 3 (Study 2). Data were collected in UK, South Africa, Canada, Poland, and Italy from minimum of 348 participants to maximum of 1056 participants.

Paper #1: Gąsiorowska, A. & Ecer, E. (2026). **"From insecurity to exchange: Attachment anxiety and avoidance predict exchange orientation via different psychological mechanisms"**. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* (IF = 1.1)

The paper presents results of three studies aiming to examine relationships between attachment insecurity aspects and exchange orientation, as well as calculative mindset in relationships with romantic partners and acquaintances. Study 1 tested relationship between attachment insecurity aspects and exchange orientation controlling for individual characteristics of personality, dark triad, material values, basic psychological needs, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, greed, and self-construal. Controlling of these variables, as Authors write, aimed "to ensure that observed relationships reflected genuine compensatory mechanisms rather than spurious associations with related constructs". Sample was collected in U.K. via Prolific Academic. Part of this sample's participants were tested in Study 2 which was a follow up study after a year. Results of Study 1 revealed expected associations between attachment anxiety and exchange orientation toward romantic partner and acquaintance, as well as between attachment avoidance and exchange orientation toward romantic partner. Study 2 additionally evidenced this relationship between attachment insecurity dimensions and exchange orientation (and between anxiety and calculative mindset) in a longitudinal perspective revealing that the exchange orientation can be explained by attachment insecurity. Study 3 aimed to test and evidenced two different pathways through which attachment insecurity dimensions may be linked with exchange orientation. The data were collected in UK and South Africa with via Prolific Academic. Results evidenced mediating effect of the need for closure in the relationship between attachment anxiety and exchange orientation, and the mediating effect of desire for control in the relationship between attachment avoidance and exchange orientation. The authors discuss the results referring to attachment theory, namely internal working models of attachment and write that "different attachment insecurities give rise to different compensatory strategies rather than a uniform preference for exchange orientation."

Paper #2: Ecer, E & Gąsiorowska, A. (in review from April 2026). **"From insecurity to instrumentality: Exchange orientation as a relational mechanism linking attachment to interpersonal objectification"**. *British Journal of Social Psychology*

The second paper in the collection extends the findings from the first paper by using both, attachment insecurity dimensions and exchange orientation, to explain interpersonal objectification where exchange orientation was analyzed as the mediator or moderator. The study is settled not only in attachment theory but also in the Social Interaction Model of Objectification. The paper presents

results from three studies with sampling carried out in UK, USA, and Canada to enhance generalizability of findings “across cultural contexts”. Study 1 has a quasi-longitudinal design with repeated data collection after six months. It tested and evidenced that attachment anxiety and avoidance were associated with exchange orientation of adults in Time 1 and explain interpersonal objectification in Time 2.

Study 2 and Study 3 replicate these findings using experimental approaches to measure attachment activation (Study 2) and exchange orientation (Study 3). Experimental procedure in Study 2 was based on priming where participants were asked to recall and describe a specific relationship and reflect on emotions associated with it. Three different conditions were tested to which participants were randomly assigned. In the anxiety condition participants were asked to recall a relationship in which they feared rejection or abandonment. In the avoidance condition participants recalled a relationship in which they felt uncomfortable with emotional closeness or intimacy. In the control condition a stranger was the object of the recall. Results revealed that both conditions of attachment insecurity resulted in increase in interpersonal objectification mediated by exchange orientation. Additionally, reduced communal orientation was also found as a significant mediator between the main variables.

Study 3 approached analyzed associations by testing closer exchange orientation using experimental manipulation on Canadian adults. The experimental group was asked to recall and describe a past event in a close relationship where they adopted an exchange-oriented mindset, whereas the control group was asked to recall the last time they spent time with their romantic partner. In the model investigated in this study exchange orientation was tested as a moderator (not mediator) of the association between attachment and interpersonal objectification. Results revealed that the exchange orientation manipulation increased exchange orientation and decreased communal orientation. The Authors conclude that “exchange orientation plays a causal role in linking attachment insecurities to interpersonal objectification”. Considering that the data are not longitudinal and exchange orientation was tested as the moderator I would argue whether the conclusion about the causal role of exchange orientation can be formulated.

Summarizing, across the three studies, attachment avoidance revealed a stronger and a more stable association with interpersonal objectification than attachment anxiety. Findings from the three studies are summarized and discussed in the light of relational models theory and Social Interaction Model of Objectification. The authors propose that exchange-based orientation may serve as compensatory strategy (p. 27). As I understand the Authors mean that the compensation relates to high levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance as they did not measure attachment security level (which, according to clinical assessment system, not necessarily is indicated by low anxiety and avoidance levels).

Paper #3: **Ecer, E., Raguso, G., Andrighetto, L., Gąsiorowska, A. (2026). “From insecurity to exchange: Attachment anxiety and avoidance predict exchange orientation via different psychological mechanisms”. *Acta Psychologica* (IF = 3.8)**

The third paper approaches relationship between dimensions of attachment insecurity and interpersonal objectification focusing the study lens on theory of mind (ToM) and empathy as mediators. It discusses three studies carried out in three countries. Based on the previous findings the authors hypothesized that attachment avoidance will be associated with interpersonal objectification of others and that this relationship will be mediated by low ToM and empathy levels.

Study 1 utilized attachment measure different than in other studies presented in all papers (ECR and its short version ECR-S) which also assesses avoidance and anxiety in its revised version (see Lubowska & van de Vijver, 2020). The analyzed data were obtained from students in Poland and results revealed that attachment avoidance (but not anxiety) was related to interpersonal objectification.

Study 2 used the ECR-S scale and the same sample as in the Paper #1 with data collected in UK twice with half a year time break between measurement waves. The associations between attachment avoidance (Time 1) and interpersonal and self-objectification (Time 2) mediated by ToM (Time 2) were hypothesized and evidenced in the study controlling for different personality aspects.

Study 3 aimed to replicate the previous findings in a new sample from Italy with the use of attribution of humanity as a novel indicator of interpersonal objectification additional to exchange orientation. Results evidenced that ToM mediated the association between attachment avoidance and general objectification of others as well as attribution of humanity. In the last model empathy was also mediating the analyzed association.

Added value of the dissertation and arguments for consideration:

The set of work presenting results of multiple studies in which Emrullah Ecer contributed has been already reviewed and evaluated as important and adding to the fields of interest by the journal reviewers. I fully agree with the positive evaluation of the previous reviewers. As, however, different reviewers represent different theoretical and methodological perspectives, I will add to these evaluation my comments representing perspectives of attachment theory (both, social and developmental approaches), psychometrics, and cross-cultural psychology.

The added value of the presented set of works addresses, in my opinion, description of the cognitive and affective processes associated with attachment avoidance and anxiety that can be observed in social interactions. Results of the presented studies revealed that high levels of attachment avoidance (and to less extent anxiety) reported by adults may be associated with their tendency to use calculative mindset, exchange orientation and, eventually, objectification of others. These findings add, in my opinion, to explanation of interactional dynamics of highly avoidant/dismissive and (to less extent) anxious/preoccupied individuals. Application of such results in psychological practice may be helpful in planning intervention programs and therapy after additional future studies connecting the present findings with their applicability in practice.

Furthermore, the sampling used in these studies as well as various study designs are impressive and, most of all, provide power for verification of formulated hypotheses including hypotheses on causality between model variables. Thus, these aspects of the presented works should be strongly underlined in the dissertation evaluation as they provide a robust (replicated across samples and study designs) evidences for reviled cognitive and affective mechanisms underlying attachment insecurity and social functioning of individuals (differing in attachment anxiety and avoidance levels) in interpersonal relations.

Additional added value of the presented set of works relates to further extension of theoretical frameworks central for the dissertation, namely social interaction model of objectification, relational models theory, or market/calculative mindset framework. Such extension may meaningfully add to bridging these perspectives with attachment theory and research.

Continuing my review I would like to argue with the Author's approach to the presented model referring to the attachment construct and address two additional aspects, in my opinion, underdeveloped in the dissertation addressing the construct of control and culture.

Attachment

First, I would argue with causal inferences formulated in hypotheses and discussion of findings across papers by referring to defining attachment as intrapsychic organizational construct (Sroufe & Wates, 1977) organizing affect, memories, cognitions, and behaviors. The Authors' approach proposes causal interpretations across papers. Just to provide three examples: It is postulated that attachment anxiety leads to hyperactivating strategies (p.7, p. 8 in Author's summary); individuals with attachment avoidance do adopt deactivating strategies (p. 8 Author's summary); or "The relationship between attachment anxiety and exchange orientation would be mediated by the need for cognitive closure, reflecting the desire for structure and predictability to compensate for relational uncertainty in individuals with high attachment anxiety" (Hypothesis in Paper 1). Not in agreement with this line of reasoning proposing causality inferences, I will propose that the set of results speaks about: attachment construct rather than about compensatory mechanisms and (which is related) bidirectional associations rather than about causality among the studied variables (except of interpersonal objectification of others).

Thus, I would see the needs for control and closure, ToM and empathy, as well as exchange orientation as indicators of attachment strategies among which causality analysis is less adequate than analysis of associations. My justification comes from attachment theory as presented by Bowlby, Ainsworth, as well as Mikulincer and Shaver.

Two perspectives guide attachment research nowadays. One builds on the heritage of Bowlby and Ainsworth and is known as developmental-clinical approach. It uses observational and narrative assessment methods to test unconscious dynamics of attachment processes. The other one is relatively more novel (represented by Mikulincer and Shaver), emerged in social and personality psychology, and assesses attachment processes using self-report measures or experimental designs (one of which was used in Paper 2 in this dissertation). Perspective on attachment presented in the collection of works included into the dissertation builds on and adds to social and personality research on attachment rather than to clinical-developmental approach. Even though the Authors (rarely) refer to attachment styles and its dynamics, the social and personality psychology approach to attachment is visible in theoretical frameworks used as the background of the presented works, addressing: social defense theory of attachment styles, relational schemas framework (interpersonal objectification focus), social interaction model of objectification, relational models theory, or market/calculative mindset framework.

Attachment theory, irrespective of preferred approach, postulates that attachment quality is delineated by the individual usage of primary (secure) and secondary (insecure) attachment strategies activated not chronically but only in times of distress which (unconsciously) triggers the need for closeness with one's own attachment figure. Both secondary attachment strategies are different. The hyperactivating strategy of behavioral attachment system is indicated by one's anxiety, related rumination, tension, and ambivalence between approaching and avoiding closeness with one's attachment figure (not with everyone). The deactivating strategy is based on avoidance of closeness with one's own attachment figure in times of distress (not all the time). These differences are associated with a cascade of additional characteristics describing functioning of distressed anxious and avoidant individuals. First, in contrast to secure individuals, insecure ones are not emotionally and cognitively flexible in times of distress and fix on rumination focused on the attachment figure which is perceived as not available (anxious strategy), or suppress the need for closeness with close other who is avoided in favor of self-reliance. Such organizational view on attachment set, in my opinion, the stage for another perspective then proposed by the Authors.

The need for closure (tested in the dissertation as the mediator), may indicate ambivalence and anxiety, whereas the need for control (tested as another mediator) reflects self-reliance high in avoidant individuals. Furthermore, insightfulness (mentalization or ToM), as well as sensitivity of insecure individuals has been extensively reported in attachment studies as lower than in secure individuals. Anxious individuals reveal however higher than avoidant individuals insight into emotional states of self and others (even though it is less adequate and lower than in secure individuals). These differences may explain how attachment insecurity is related with lower levels of ToM and empathy leading, especially for avoidant individuals, to objectification of others.

Even results of longitudinal or quasi-longitudinal studies testing causality are, in my opinion, revealing that different components indicative for attachment strategies in T2 are stable in time, thus can be predicted by other attachment components in T1. Additionally, stability of anxiety and avoidance in time revealed in Study 2 in Paper 1, was revealed as higher than the stability of exchange orientation indicators. It may suggest that attachment strategies are the basic and stable trait underlying less stable and probably situation and person-dependent exchange orientation. Furthermore, revealed shared variance between exchange orientation and attachment insecurity dimensions may also indicate that exchange orientation is an indicator of the same underlying attachment construct.

Furthermore, and referring to proposition of the Authors that exchange orientation may be the compensatory mechanisms responding to anxiety and avoidance, I would like to add an additional argument speaking against such approach. If unaware processes are not tested empirically, conclusions about compensatory mechanisms are, in my opinion, unjustified and as such may

introduce a risk of imposing overgeneralized conclusions that insecure individuals were evidenced to compensate their insecurities. In my opinion that was not really evidenced in the whole set of the presented studies.

Continuing and building on the above mentioned arguments, I would like to highlight the strong and added value of the presented set of results. Self-report scales used in all papers (ECR and RAAS) are assessing the reporter's anxiety and avoidance in general, not in times of distress. Thus, I find the results discussed in the set of papers and presented as the doctoral dissertation as valuable. They reveal that self-reported levels of anxiety and avoidance (not only measured in times of distress) are associated with preferences for one's usage of exchange orientation and interpersonal objectification in social relations.

Summarizing, I would like to know the opinion of the Author on the model of multiple attachment indicators I propose and described above which, as opposed to the Authors conclusions: (a) reduces causality between attachment anxiety and avoidance and needs for control/closure and exchange-related interpersonal orientation, and (b) does not allow for conclusions postulating compensation mechanisms.

Additionally, the Polish translation of the abstract translates terms central to attachment theory in barely acceptable way, where anxious attachment is translated as "niepewny styl" and described in terms of fear/lęk. Avoidant style is translated as "unikowy styl". Furthermore, it should be noted that attachment styles were not tested in any of the presented studies.

Control

Second, the need for closure and the need for control, tested as mediators between attachment and exchange orientation in Paper 1, seems to be the two aspects of control. The need for cognitive closure was tested as mediator for anxious individuals, whereas desirability of control for avoidant individuals. As measures and their underlying constructs were not introduced in the paper it is largely unknown how the Authors approached the self-control construct. After an online search I found that according to the scale Authors (Roets and Kruglanski) "*Need for cognitive closure* is defined as a desire for an answer in order to end further information processing and judgment, even if that answer is not the correct or best answer." The next self-control indicator, the *desire for control* is less situational, as The Desirability of Control Scale used in the study was "designed to measure individual differences in the general level of motivation to control the events in one's life" (Burger & Cooper, 1979). It seems that the levels as well as theoretical approaches to conceptualization of both self-control indicators differ. I would like to be more informed about similarities and differences in the Author-s approach to self-control. Additionally, the instruments-based definitions of both control indicators seem to evidence further that the need for closure fits well high rumination of anxious individuals, whereas the need for control fits self-reliant nature of avoidant individuals.

Culture and sampling

The information about characteristics of samples is very scarce across papers and sampling by Prolific Academic may be perceived as controversial. Thus, I would like to ask about potential effects and limitations of findings from all studies that may be biased by the choice of sampling strategy.

Country comparisons perspective is addressed in aims of studies (e.g., in Study 3 of paper 3) but the research questions, hypotheses, nor their rigorous testing were not addressed across papers. The choice of countries seems to be an outcome of personal connections and availability of Prolific Academic service in a given country rather than a planned sampling strategy. Furthermore, the rigor of cross-cultural analyses was not met, including lack of testing measurement invariance of scales or moderation effect of country on studied variables (significance of paths or its lack is not an evidence for significance of the moderation effect).

Thus, I would consider as more adequate if the Authors conclude across studies that the study was or was not replicated in different samples, rather than that there are cross-cultural differences or similarities in findings. Readers not familiar with the methodological rigor of cross-cultural analyses may be lead to a false conclusions that study results may be universal or culture-specific. This was not

tested, nor evidenced across the presented papers. Yet, considering that the study does not aspire to add to cross-cultural psychology field I do not find this weakness as the major one in my overall evaluation of the presented set of works.

Conclusion and recommendations

Summarizing and highlighting that differences in interpretation of results do not undermine the set of works subjected to the review process but were formulated for consideration, I recommend the admission of Mr. Emurhell Ecer to the subsequent stages of the proceedings for the conferral of the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences in the discipline of psychology.

Podsumowując wartość wyników przedstawionych badań dla psychologii stwierdzam, że **przedstawiony do recenzji zbiór prac w pełni spełnia wymagania ustawowe określone w art. 187 ustawy z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r. – Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce (Dz. U. z 2021 r. poz. 478, 619, 1630). Na tej podstawie wnoszę do Wysockiej Rady Naukowej Instytutu Psychologii Uniwersytetu SWPS o dopuszczenie mgr Emurhella Ecera do dalszych etapów postępowania w sprawie nadania stopnia doktora nauk społecznych w dyscyplinie psychologia.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Z. Lubersa', with a stylized, flowing script.