

Doctoral Thesis Evaluation Report-Cristina Baldissarri

Thesis Title: Objectification and exchange orientation as results of attachment insecurity: Exploration of the relation and its psychological mechanisms

Candidate: Emrullah Ecer

Supervisor: Prof. dr hab. Agata Gąsiorowska

Candidate's Individual Contribution and Theoretical Originality

The doctoral dissertation presented by Emrullah Ecer constitutes an innovative, highly original, and rigorous contribution to psychological science. A major theoretical strength of this work lies in its integrative capacity, seamlessly bridging individual dynamics such as attachment styles, dyadic processes within romantic relationships, and broader social constructs such as interpersonal objectification. By intersecting clinical psychology with social psychology, the candidate demonstrates how clinical constructs of attachment insecurity directly inform social dynamics. The candidate's individual contribution and research independence are clearly demonstrated through the conceptualization and execution of this complex research program, as well as his role as first author on one of the three key articles, which highlights his leadership and thorough mastery of the scientific process. The candidate has achieved high international visibility, with two papers already published in top peer-reviewed journals (Basic and Applied Social Psychology and Acta Psychologica), and a third under review in the prestigious British Journal of Social Psychology (BJSP).

Structure and Objectives Across the Dissertation

The overarching objectives of the dissertation are clearly articulated and logically structured across three substantial empirical articles comprising a total of nine distinct studies. The theoretical trajectory follows a clear progression across the candidate's work.

In the first article, the candidate focuses on individual psychological mechanisms, establishing how attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance predict an exchange orientation through distinct mediating paths. Specifically, the candidate identifies Need for Cognitive Closure as the key mediator for attachment anxiety, while Desire for Control serves as the key mediator for attachment avoidance.

In the second article, the research introduces a negative consequence of the compensatory exchange orientation approach, which is the interpersonal objectification, investigating the causal and downstream pathways from attachment insecurities to objectification, through exchange orientation.



In the third article, the investigation extends into cognitive and affective deficits, exploring how Theory of Mind and empathy explain the direct pathway from attachment avoidance to objectification, while also revealing compelling suppressor effects involving attachment anxiety, empathy, and objectification.

Methodological Rigor and Open Science Across All Articles

Across all three articles, the candidate displays research competencies and methodological versatility. The empirical scope of the dissertation is remarkable, encompassing nine studies and a combined sample of 5,199 participants, broken down into 2,309 participants in the first article, 1,668 in the second article, and 1,222 in the third article. The candidate demonstrates advanced skills in employing diverse methodologies, combining cross-sectional designs, longitudinal tracking, cross-cultural samples across six countries including the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, South Africa, Poland, and Italy, as well as experimental priming paradigms. Furthermore, the entire body of work strongly adheres to Open Science and transparency practices. Beyond pre-registering the majority of the empirical studies, the candidate systematically performed a priori power analyses to determine optimal sample sizes across studies and made the research materials accessible online.

Practical and Applied Value of the Research

The practical and applied value of the dissertation is particularly noteworthy. By focusing on actionable underlying psychological processes such as Need for Cognitive Closure, Desire for Control, mentalizing capacity, and empathy, the candidate provides clear targets for clinical and social interventions. In a contemporary society increasingly dominated by market-price mindsets and interpersonal objectification, understanding these specific mechanisms allows practitioners to design targeted protocols. These insights can help shift individuals away from transactional, exchange-based relational styles toward healthier, communal, and empathy-driven relational patterns.

Methodological Considerations and Points for Further Discussion

While the dissertation is undeniably strong, there are some methodological and theoretical nuances spanning individual articles and the thesis as a whole that the candidate could profitably elaborate upon during the oral defense.

Regarding the first article, a minor reporting limitation is the absence of comprehensive descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, as well as full correlation matrices directly within



the main body of the text, which would have further enhanced transparency. Additionally, in the first article, the South African sample is conceptualized as representing a collectivistic culture; the candidate could clarify whether an online sample drawn from South Africa truly reflects collectivistic norms or if it leans toward urban, Westernized individualist patterns.

Regarding the second article, a critical methodological consideration concerns the shift in operationalizing exchange orientation from a mediator to a moderator, as well as the experimental design used to establish the causality of exchange orientation. The candidate could discuss why a 2x2 manipulation design, manipulating attachment insecurity and then exchange orientation prior to outcome measurement, was not implemented. Furthermore, measuring baseline attachment of some participants after the exchange orientation manipulation may have introduced measurement noise; the candidate could reflect on how the experimental setup could be optimized in future replications.

Regarding the third article, the candidate could expand upon the fascinating suppressor effect observed between attachment anxiety, empathy, and objectification, elaborating on its broader theoretical implications for relational dynamics.

Looking at aspects concerning all three articles, some general methodology points warrant further clarification by the candidate. First, because a substantial portion of the data across the articles was collected via the online platform Prolific, the candidate could offer a critical reflection on data quality, participant attentiveness, and the overall benefits and limitations of relying on online crowdsourced samples when investigating sensitive interpersonal phenomena.

Second, regarding the Social Interaction Model of Objectification framework, which traditionally views objectification as a goal-driven, sexually motivated process, the candidate could discuss how non-sexual individual, interpersonal and social factors, such as for example attachment style, exchange orientation, desire for control, power, economic exchange norms, and so on, could fit into a broader interpersonal model of objectification.

Third, the candidate could address whether demographic variables such as gender and age act as structural moderators across the proposed pathways. On the one hand, gender and gender-related power, as suggested by SIMO, could moderate the relationships among the variables considered in the research. On the other hand, given that age correlated significantly with key variables in the third article, the candidate could discuss whether age-related shifts in emotional regulation or life stages might alter these psychological mechanisms.

Fourth, because attachment was evaluated continuously via Likert scales across all studies, the candidate could discuss whether analyzing continuous scores versus distinct attachment categories, such as secure versus clinically anxious or avoidant, might reveal specific threshold effects or non-linear patterns.

CB

Finally, in light of modern macro-level social structures that promote instrumental human interactions and market price mindset, the candidate could discuss how these societal factors interact with micro-level individual attachment insecurities and propose specific social or clinical interventions aimed at fostering communal mindsets over exchange-oriented ones.

Final Conclusion

The doctoral dissertation presented by Emrullah Ecer is a high-quality academic work that fulfills all requirements for the award of a PhD degree. The candidate demonstrates theoretical maturity, advanced statistical expertise, and the capacity for conducting high-impact independent research. The minor methodological considerations identified serve as fruitful avenues for scholarly discussion during the defense rather than detracting from the work. Considering the points noted throughout this evaluation, the overall evaluation is completely positive.

Cashmir Bulchur

CP