

Agata Gasiorowska¹ , Tomasz Zaleskiewicz¹ ¹SWPS University SWPS University, Wrocław, Poland

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR - Agata Gasiorowska, agasiorowska@swps.edu.pl

Social assistance or agency? Attachment Styles Moderate the Impact of Control Threat on Social Relationship Preferences

Abstract: Building upon Gasiorowska and Zaleskiewicz's (2021, 2023), we explored how a control threat and attachment style influence social relationship preferences. This experiment aimed to investigate how experiencing a control threat affects individuals with secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment patterns when they can choose between seeking assistance from the market, asking a close person for help, or coping with the situation alone. Participants with different attachment styles were randomly assigned to either the lack of control condition ($n = 290$) or the having control condition ($n = 277$). Individuals with an anxious attachment were more inclined to choose the market-exchange option and less likely to select the agentic and communal options when faced with a control threat. Meanwhile, those with an avoidant attachment exhibited a higher tendency to choose the agentic option, while their preference for noncontingent help decreased after exposure to the control threat. Surprisingly, secure attachment individuals showed an increased preference for noncontingent help and decreased preferences for market exchange and self-reliance when exposed to the control threat compared to when they had control. These findings suggest that participation in market relationships may meet vital psychological needs and serve as a safeguard against attachment insecurities.

Keywords: *social relations, agency, control threat, attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance*

INTRODUCTION

In everyday situations, individuals may either handle challenges independently or seek help from others (Milyavsky et al., 2022), choosing between two options: asking for assistance or paying for a service (Gasiorowska & Zaleskiewicz, 2022). For instance, when needing transportation to the airport, one may drive their own car, ask a friend for a ride, or hire a taxi. Factors influencing people's decisions in selecting either communal or market-based support include financial resources accessibility, relationship strength with friends, and other psychological aspects like attachment orientation and feelings of a lack of control. Previous research has shown that experiencing a lack of control increased people's willingness to seek assistance in the market rather than ask a close person for help, especially among participants with higher attachment anxiety (Gasiorowska & Zaleskiewicz, 2023). However, the

results for participants with attachment avoidance were less pronounced and showed that this dimension was related to participants' preferences for the market option independent of control threat. Nevertheless, previous studies only examined the choice between two options, both of which utilize social assistance, without allowing participants to choose an agentic (self-reliant) option. This paper aims to fill this gap. Therefore, we wanted to further explore the effect of control threat by examining how it affects individuals with secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment patterns when they are given the option to choose between seeking help in the market, asking for help from a close person, and managing the situation on their own.

MARKET VERSUS COMMUNAL SOCIALITY

The Relational models theory by A.P. Fiske (1992; Fiske & Haslam, 2005; Gallus et al., 2021) has established



a typology of social relationships in which people can view their relationships with others as communal sharing, equality matching, authority ranking, or market pricing. Among these, communal sharing and market pricing are the most distinct (Fiske, 1992; McGraw & Tetlock, 2005). Communal relationships involve acts of kindness and generosity, with the goal of increasing the recipient's welfare or happiness (Clark & Mills, 1993; Fiske, 1992). On the other hand, market relationships emphasize individual efficiency (Fiske, 1992; Zaki et al., 2021) and follow the rule of proportionality in social interactions (Gallus et al., 2021; Rai & Fiske, 2011; Zaleskiewicz et al., 2020).

The differences between communal and market relationships suggest that people choose one over the other not just for practical reasons, such as saving money by relying on friends instead of paying for a service. The two types of relationships also offer different psychological benefits. For example, participating in a market exchange can enhance feelings of control, agency, and self-reliance (Gasiorowska et al., 2016; Gasiorowska & Zaleskiewicz, 2021; Zaki et al., 2021; Zaleskiewicz & Gasiorowska, 2017), which may be particularly appealing to those who value independence (Thomsen et al., 2007). Therefore, in some cases, people may prefer market solutions over communal relationships to gain the psychological benefits of market-type exchanges.

Both market pricing and communal sharing represent social relationships, hence they require at least some contact with other people. However, there are some situations in which people tend to avoid being dependent on others, especially in close, emotional dependence. One example is being high in the attachment avoidance (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). People high in attachment avoidance tend to prioritize their independence and self-sufficiency over close relationships with others, hence they may prefer market-related solutions to communal ones (Gasiorowska & Zaleskiewicz, 2023). However, when their freedom or autonomy is being threatened, as it would be under a control threat, they may react in ways that help them maintain distance from others, and withdraw from any relationship, no matter if it is regulated by the market or communal norms, to regain their feelings of independence and agency.

COMPENSATORY CONTROL, ATTACHMENT, AND MARKET RELATIONSHIPS

Compensatory control theory posits that people have a deep-seated desire for personal control, driven by the need to perceive the world as structured, orderly, and predictable (Kay et al., 2008, 2009). Random or chaotic rules are anxiety-inducing, while the belief in personal control affirms that the world is not haphazard (Laurin et al., 2008). When feelings of personal control are diminished, individuals seek external sources of control to restore the structure in their social and physical environments (Kay et al., 2008, 2009; Whitson & Galinsky, 2008). This helps to rebuild confidence that the world is

structured and nonrandom. When personal control is threatened, people are more likely to adopt beliefs in a controlling God, endorse conspiracy theories, believe in powerful enemies, prefer products that restore structure to their lives, or choose more hierarchical settings (Friesen et al., 2014; Kay et al., 2008; Shepherd et al., 2011; Sullivan et al., 2010).

Gasiorowska and Zaleskiewicz (2021) recently investigated the advantage of market relationships in providing a sense of control. They proposed that such relationships can fulfill fundamental human needs for order, mastery, and predictability due to their clear and discernible rules that give people insight into the situation and provide a sense of structure (Fiske, 1992; Fiske & Haslam, 2005). They found that market-based cues increased personal sense of control, especially in those with insecure attachment styles (Gasiorowska & Zaleskiewicz, 2021). In subsequent studies, the authors investigated the relationship between attachment style and willingness to seek support in either communal or market-based relationships when faced with a control threat (Gasiorowska & Zaleskiewicz, 2023). They found that individuals with higher attachment anxiety were more willing to seek support in the market rather than ask for help from a close person, while attachment avoidance was positively associated with a preference for the market option even in the no-threat condition. Interestingly, individuals with low attachment avoidance showed a stronger preference for the market option when exposed to a control threat vs no such exposure. This suggests that the specific role of attachment avoidance in the context of engaging in either communal or market relationships is more nuanced than the role of attachment anxiety and requires further investigation. This project addresses this gap.

Attachment theory suggests that childhood experiences with attachment figures shape how people approach close relationships as adults (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). This leads to two dimensions of attachment in adulthood: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Ainsworth, 2014; Fraley et al., 2000; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Individuals with attachment anxiety express preoccupation with relationships and have a strong need for emotional closeness, reassurance, and comfort (Ainsworth, 1989; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Communal relationships, while psychologically rewarding, may not be effective when formed by individuals with attachment anxiety (Clark & Aragón, 2013; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Furthermore, interactions with attachment figures may not reinforce anxious individuals' sense that problems are solvable and that goals can be achieved (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2017). Murray et al. (2006) also suggested that some people take defensive actions, such as devaluing their partner or the relationship itself, when threatened by rejection. This could lead them to look for other types of relationships or try to change the rules that regulate them. Attachment anxiety also predicts lower adherence to communal norms and perceptions of partner adherence to a communal norm, as well as greater adherence to an exchange norm in marriage, which

is viewed as an ideal communal norm (Clark et al., 2010). Recent studies also demonstrated that turning to market relationships under external threat is particularly common among individuals high in attachment anxiety, even in situations where a communal norm would be more appropriate, such as the need for emotional support (Gasiorowska & Zaleskiewicz, 2023).

Individuals with high attachment avoidance tend to adopt a strategy of deactivating their attachment system, which allows them to escape the frustration and distress caused by emotionally insensitive attachment figures in their early experiences (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Rather than seeking intimacy and emotional support, individuals high in attachment avoidance emphasize self-efficacy and personal power, using various defense strategies to refute the need for close relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2017). They are less likely to provide emotional support and experience less intimacy, and may show aversion to commitment due to the anticipation of relationship failure (Vicary & Fraley, 2007). This strategy is accompanied by an oversimplified representation of the interpersonal world, with an expectation of unreliable and potentially dangerous intentions in others, leading to excessive self-reliance (Campbell & Marshall, 2011; Leone et al., 2018). Gasiorowska and Zaleskiewicz (2023) demonstrated the propensity to avoid close bonds among those with avoidant attachment is so strong that they would prefer market solutions over communal ones even when their sense of control was not threatened. One possible interpretation of this result could be that people with such an attachment style are reluctant to engage in social relationships when their sense of control is threatened. In other words, although the use of market-like options may be perceived as an alternative to asking for help, it appears that market relationships, even if more formalized and not requiring closeness with others, might not function effectively as a psychological buffer for those who prefer to avoid relationships at all. Hence, in their studies, participants with the avoidant attachment style could not escape social interactions to act independently and rely on their agency. Therefore, in this experiment, we tested the effect of control threat and attachment style on support seeking, but we allowed our participants to choose between three options as a possible solution to their dilemma: one that involved taking a costly action on their own (agentic, self-reliant option), a second that involved paying the same amount of money as in the agentic solution for a service (market option), and a third that involved asking a friend for help and incurring no proximal monetary cost (communal option). We expected that the threat to personal control (vs. neutral condition) would interact with attachment style to predict the preference for the specific solution in the presented situation. More specifically, we predicted that (1) for securely attached participants, the control threat would increase their preference for noncontingent help and decrease their preference for market exchange and self-reliant options compared to the neutral condition; (2) for anxiously attached participants, the control threat would

increase their preference for market exchange and decrease their preference for both the self-reliant solution and noncontingent help compared to the neutral condition; and (3) for participants with avoidant attachment style, the control threat would increase their preference for the self-reliant option, and decrease their preference for both noncontingent help and market exchange when compared to the neutral condition. We preregistered our hypotheses, experimental design, analyses, and sample size at https://aspredicted.org/8J4_YYW. The data, analysis syntax, and study materials are available at https://researchbox.org/1483&PEER_REVIEW_passcode=WBIWMV.

METHOD

Participants and procedure

We relied on the power analysis from Gasiorowska & Zaleskiewicz's (2023) Study 1, assuming we needed to recruit at least 103 participants per condition. We assumed such a sample size for each condition for the three attachment styles in this experiment and planned to recruit 618 participants. However, because this study was designed as a two-stage study, in which participants were contacted twice with ten weeks in between, attrition considerations from the first to the second part of the study, and because of the potentially small number of participants with anxious attachment style (Mickelson et al., 1997), in the first stage we recruited $N = 1273$ participants from Prolific Academic, constituting a representative sample of U.S. residents in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity. Participants completed a modified version of ECR-R scale (Fraley et al., 2000) as a part of a larger research project. Participants answered 36 items referring to close others in general on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree." These items were averaged to form indicators of two dimensions: attachment anxiety: $\alpha = .93$, $M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.29$; and attachment avoidance: $\alpha = .93$, $M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.14$. Using k-means cluster analysis, we categorized participants into groups and identified those with the secure attachment style ($n = 330$; relatively low scores on both dimensions: $M_{\text{anx}} = 1.96$, $SD = 0.55$, $M_{\text{avo}} = 2.35$, $SD = 0.60$), the anxious attachment style ($n = 296$; relatively high scores on the anxiety dimension and low scores on the avoidant dimension: $M_{\text{anx}} = 4.47$, $SD = 0.69$; $M_{\text{avo}} = 3.38$, $SD = 0.60$), and the avoidance attachment style ($n = 342$; relatively high scores on the avoidant dimension and low scores on the anxious dimension $M_{\text{anx}} = 2.76$, $SD = 0.68$, $M_{\text{avo}} = 4.22$, $SD = 0.74$).

Ten weeks later, they were invited to participate in an unrelated study in exchange for £0.50. Of these, $N = 567$ completed the procedure within five consecutive working days (55.03% women, 44.27% men, 0.71% other; median age = 46 years, $M = 45.42$, $SD = 16.74$). The response rate was highest in the avoidant style group ($n = 210$), followed by the secure style group ($n = 206$) and the anxious style group ($n = 151$). No data were excluded at this stage, and data collection was not continued after analysis.

After participants gave informed consent and answered demographic questions about gender and age, they were randomly assigned to either the lack of control condition ($n = 290$) or the having control condition ($n = 277$). Randomization was performed separately for each of the three attachment styles groups. The control threat manipulation consisted of a questionnaire in which participants indicated the degree to which they agreed with nine statements about their control over various outcomes (Gasiorowska & Zaleskiewicz, 2021, 2023; Sullivan et al., 2010). All participants answered four filler statements designed not to threaten perceived personal control (e.g., “I have control over the kinds of clothing I wear”). In the control threat condition, five remaining items were designed to threaten participants’ feelings of control over chaotic risks (e.g., “I have control over: . . . whether I am exposed to a disease”). In the no-control-threat condition, the five remaining items were intended to reinforce perceptions of personal control (e.g., “I have control over . . . how much TV I watch”). All responses were made on a 5-point scale that ranged from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree.” Participants then answered a question intended to test the effectiveness of the manipulation (“In general, how much control do you feel you have over what happens in your life?”) using a slider from 0 = “none at all” to 100 = “very much.” Then, participants were asked to read the following scenario that contained three possible answers (displayed in a randomized order):

“Imagine that you are going for a few days’ business trip and need to get to the airport, which is located 30 miles away from the place you live. You consider three possibilities of how to reach the airport: (1) you can drive there in your car and pay \$50 for parking, (2) you can call a taxi that would cost you \$25 one way (\$50 return), or (3) you can ask your friend for a lift, knowing that it would take them a whole evening to help you. What would you do in such a case?”

The option chosen by participants served as the dependent variable (DV), with the first one being the agentic option ($n = 281$, 49.6% of choices), the second being the market option ($n = 190$, 33.5% of choices), and the third being the communal option ($n = 96$, 16.9% of choices).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Manipulation check

Participants in the lack of control condition reported having less control over their lives ($M = 67.73$, $SD = 17.34$) than participants in the having control condition ($M = 79.38$, $SD = 16.38$), $F(1, 565) = 67.41$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .107$, confirming that the manipulation was effective.

Hypotheses testing

To test our predictions, we a multinomial logistic regression with the choice of one of the three options as the dependent variable. We introduced control threat, attachment style, and their interaction as predictors. Initial

loglikelihood ratio test indicated that the effect of experimental manipulation was not significant, $\chi^2(2) = 2.45$, $p = .293$, while the effect of attachment style was significant, $\chi^2(4) = 15.78$, $p = .003$. Most importantly, in line with our preregistered hypothesis, we found a significant interaction between control threat manipulation and attachment style, $\chi^2(4) = 22.68$, $p = .023$. Therefore, we decomposed this interaction, investigating the pattern of choices in the three groups that differed in attachment style. Initial loglikelihood ratio test revealed that the pattern of choices was affected by control threat manipulation in all attachment groups, respectively $\chi^2(2) = 6.10$, $p = .047$ for secure attachment, $\chi^2(2) = 6.32$, $p = .042$ for avoidant attachment, and $\chi^2(2) = 10.99$, $p = .004$ for anxious attachment. Therefore, we ran the two preregistered multinomial regressions separately in the three attachment groups. In the first regression, we used the agentic option as the reference category, while in the second regression, we used the choice of the market option as the reference category.

As demonstrated in Table 1 and in Figure 1, participants with secure attachment, on average, tended to choose the communal option less often than both agentic and market options, with no significant difference between the latter two. When their control was threatened, their probability of choosing the communal option over the agentic and market options was higher than in the no-threat condition, while the probability of choosing the agentic over the market option was not affected by the control threat. In other words, control threats increased the frequency of their communal choices without significantly affecting the frequency of agentic and market choices.

Participants with the anxious attachment style, on average, tended to choose the agentic option over the communal option, with no differences between these two and the market option. When their control was threatened, their probability of choosing the market option over the agentic and communal options was higher than in the no-threat condition, while the probability of choosing the agentic over the market option was again not affected by the control threat. In other words, control threat manipulation did not affect their frequency of communal choices, while it increased the propensity to choose the market option and decreased the propensity to choose the self-reliant option.

Finally, participants with the avoidant attachment style, on average, tended to choose the agentic option over the communal option and the market option, and the market option over the communal option. When their control was threatened, their probability of choosing the agentic option over the communal options was higher than in the no-threat condition, while the probability of choosing the agentic over the market option and the probability of choosing the communal vs market option was not affected by the control threat. Altogether, in line with our predictions, when participants with the avoidant style were exposed to the control threat (as compared to the having control condition), the probability of choosing the agentic option increased, while the probability of

Table 1. Effects of control threat on the choices between communal, agentic, and market option by participants representing different attachment styles

Attachment group	Contrasts	Predictor	B	se	exp(B)	95% CI		Z	p
						L	U		
Agentic choice as reference category									
Secure	Communal - Agentic	Intercept	-1.01	0.21	0.37	0.64	1.17	-4.82	.001
		Control threat	0.93	0.42	2.54	0.54	1.80	2.23	.026
	Market - Agentic	Intercept	-0.14	0.15	0.87	0.24	0.55	-0.92	.357
		Control threat	-0.02	0.31	0.98	1.12	5.76	-0.05	.957
Avoidant	Communal - Agentic	Intercept	-1.65	0.23	0.19	0.37	0.68	-7.10	.001
		Control threat	-1.11	0.47	0.33	0.39	1.34	-2.39	.017
	Market - Agentic	Intercept	-0.69	0.16	0.50	0.12	0.30	-4.41	.001
		Control threat	-0.33	0.31	0.72	0.13	0.82	-1.04	.300
Anxious	Communal - Agentic	Intercept	-0.60	0.22	0.55	0.56	1.20	-2.77	.006
		Control threat	0.34	0.43	1.41	1.61	7.44	0.79	.430
	Market - Agentic	Intercept	-0.20	0.19	0.82	0.36	0.84	-1.03	.301
		Control threat	1.24	0.39	3.47	0.60	3.29	3.19	.001
Market choice as reference category									
Secure	Communal - Market	Intercept	-0.87	0.21	0.42	0.85	1.56	-4.06	.001
		Control threat	0.95	0.43	2.58	0.56	1.86	2.22	.026
	Agentic - Market	Intercept	0.14	0.15	1.15	0.28	0.64	0.92	.357
		Control threat	0.02	0.31	1.02	1.12	5.95	0.05	.957
Avoidant	Communal - Market	Intercept	-0.96	0.25	0.38	1.47	2.72	-3.85	.001
		Control threat	-0.79	0.50	0.46	0.75	2.57	-1.57	.115
	Agentic - Market	Intercept	0.69	0.16	2.00	0.23	0.62	4.41	.001
		Control threat	0.33	0.31	1.39	0.17	1.21	1.04	.300
Anxious	Communal - Market	Intercept	-0.40	0.23	0.67	0.83	1.79	-1.76	.079
		Control threat	-0.90	0.45	0.41	0.13	0.62	-2.00	.046
	Agentic - Market	Intercept	0.20	0.19	1.22	0.43	1.05	1.03	.301
		Control threat	-1.24	0.39	0.29	0.17	0.98	-3.19	.001

choosing non-contingent help decreased. The probability of choosing the market-exchange option did not differ between both conditions.

DISCUSSION

The main goal of this project was to test whether, under a control threat, people with different attachment patterns reveal distinct patterns of preferences for seeking assistance from the market, asking close others for help, or relying on themselves. We found that the control threat affected participants' preferences for different options depending on their attachment style. More specifically,

when participants with the anxious attachment style were exposed to the control threat, they were more likely to choose the market-exchange option and less likely to choose both the agentic and communal options than those whose control was not threatened. Moreover, the control threat increased securely attached participants' preferences for noncontingent help and slightly decreased their preferences for market exchange and self-reliance, compared with the having control condition. Finally, participants with the avoidant attachment style showed a greater tendency to choose the agentic option, whereas their tendency to choose noncontingent help decreased when exposed to the control threat. Consistent with the results of

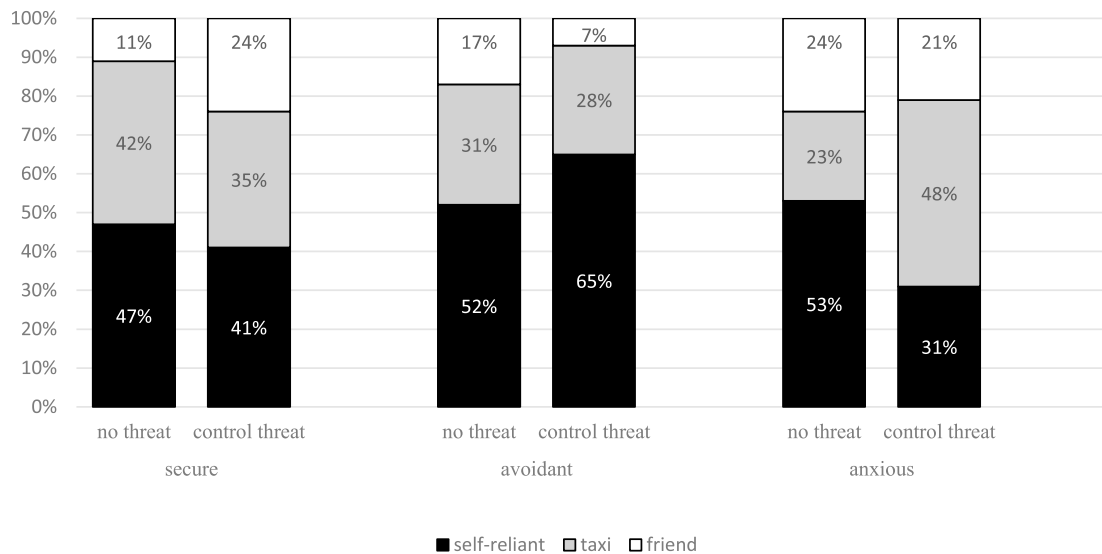


Figure 1. Participants' preferences for the three options depending on experimental condition and attachment style

Gasiorowska & Zaleskiewicz's (2023), the likelihood that avoidant participants chose the market-exchange option was not affected by the control threat.

At this point, the questions arise as to whether the effect of turning to market relations under the control threat that we found in anxiously attached individuals can also be observed in the real world and whether it is widespread instead of being specific to a small group of individuals. First, it is important to note that, in today's world, where uncertainty and ambiguity are rising (Ahir et al., 2018), people may experience reality as a persistent threat to the sense of control. Ahir et al. (2018) have shown that, over the past decade, even experts have come to view the world as less predictable and less easy to understand and that their ability to forecast the future has declined dramatically (see also Tetlock & Gardner, 2015). The growing uncertainty must have even more drastic psychological consequences for laypeople who, on the one hand, have open access to many different sources of information but whose ability to process knowledge, on the other, is highly limited (Kahneman, 2003). The confluence of information overload with people's cognitive limitations can not only produce feelings of uncertainty, which arise from doubts about whether or not a particular outcome will occur (Keren & Gerritsen, 1999), but also the experience of ambiguity, meaning that many possible interpretations of a particular event exist and each possibility is associated with a different degree of uncertainty (Furnham & Marks, 2013). If uncertainty and ambiguity depress feelings of control, defining social interactions in market-related terms might restore the belief that one can supervise and regulate the course of events (Gasiorowska & Zaleskiewicz, 2021). As we have shown, this holds especially for people whose anxious attachment patterns prevent them from building such a belief by turning to close, intimate relationships.

Although the experiment presented in this paper suggests a relationship between insecure attachment styles

and preference for market exchanges and self-reliant solutions, it was conducted with individuals considering hypothetical situations. However, observations of real-world practices in modern families also seem to support the prediction that at least some people, in their desire for personal control, want to escape the communal norms that normally govern spousal behavior.

Relationships between spouses or parents and children are usually based on positive emotions, love, and trust, so family and marriage are often cited as typical exemplars of communal relationships (Clark & Mills, 1993; Zaleskiewicz & Gasiorowska, 2017). However, recent ethnographic field research has shown that some people start using business-like practices to manage the daily lives of their families, for example, by creating homemade accounting and budgeting spreadsheets, not only to enable sensible budgeting for the family but mainly to keep track of each spouse's contribution to a common stake (Halawa & Olcoń-Kubicka, 2018). This suggests that people may want to redefine the organization of their families in ways that are more in line with market than communal guidelines (see also Clark et al., 2010). Halawa and Olcoń-Kubicka (2018) summarize their findings from interviewing couples participating in their study as follows: "Spreadsheets display situations, drawing attention to some things and not others. ...They downplay some events. They generate matters of concern and frame conversations. They reinforce gendered inequalities in control and management of domestic finances. They help one go fifty-fifty with one's partner. ...They help anticipate and project. They guard boundaries. They analyze." (p. 14). Similarly, running a household with accounting software seems to provide a sense of monitoring and control over the other partner's behavior—a feeling that is particularly attractive for anxiously attached individuals (Rodriguez et al., 2015).

Using homemade budgeting spreadsheets is one example of introducing market-like practices into commu-

nal relationships. Another solution that might give the spouses a better sense of control is to enter into a prenuptial agreement that regulates what should happen to the couple's assets and income in the event of divorce. The prenuptial agreement has clear economic significance (Smith, 2003), but it also serves certain psychological functions (Buckley, 2018) by reducing uncertainty and giving spouses a feeling of autonomy and control over the course of events (Margulies, 2003). Such an arrangement eliminates the "what's mine is yours" rule typical of communal interactions that requires partners to give up at least some control over the relationship. More importantly, willingness to sign such an agreement is associated with both anxious and avoidant attachment styles (Kochhar, 2017). Therefore, statistics showing that the number of individuals seeking a prenuptial contract in recent years has increased significantly (Rudgard, 2017) may indicate a rise in spouses' desire to control their marital relationships and may be the consequence of the increase in insecure attachment patterns.

When one feels out of control in a communal family relationship, another way to restore a sense of control might be to escape the relationship. In the context of marriage, escape means divorce. Indeed, the more visible presence of the market mentality has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in the divorce rate (Härkönen, 2014; Wang & Schofer, 2018). Obviously, many causes are responsible for such a trend (Amato, 2010; Härkönen, 2014), but some are undoubtedly related to avoiding dependence on others and people's need to expand their ability to control events. Researchers point to the desire for personal freedom and self-development, and individualism (Wang & Schofer, 2018), which are the values that matter in the free market governed by exchange relationships, and are particularly salient among people with avoidant attachment styles. Indeed, individuals with avoidant attachment patterns are more likely to divorce or simply end the relationship (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994), and they are more likely to remain single after such a situation than individuals with secure and avoidant attachment styles (Ceglian & Gardner, 1999). These findings are consistent with our findings that avoidant participants prefer to use market-type assistance rather than ask for communal help, even in the absence of a control threat, and they eagerly resort to self-reliant solutions under a control threat.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF RESEARCH

In considering the implications of our findings, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations and identify avenues for future research. First, all assessments in this project were self-reports, and we used online panels to recruit participants. Although the quality of data obtained from online labor markets has been questioned, research suggests that Prolific Academic is a reliable source of data comparable to those collected using traditional methods (Palan & Schitter, 2018). Moreover, it remains unclear to

what extent the self-reports accurately capture genuine attitudes, judgments, or preferences. As such, we need further investigations to conceptually validate our conclusions, employing behavioral measures in authentic, externally valid contexts. Field experiments conducted in natural social settings would be ideal for this purpose, allowing us to better understand the true nature of the phenomena under study.

A further consideration that must be taken into account relates to the manipulation of control perceptions in our experimental design. While we were able to manipulate control perceptions, we only measured attachment orientation, which precludes us from drawing firm causal conclusions. It is possible that the relationship between insecure attachment and a preference for market-like sociality is, in fact, the inverse of our proposed directionality. Specifically, it could be argued that individuals with market preferences may be more likely to develop less secure attachment patterns than those who prioritize intrinsic values. While we find this alternative explanation unlikely, given the well-established roots of adult attachment in early life experiences, we acknowledge the need to examine the causal linkages between our key variables in future research. It should also be noted that while attachment is generally considered a globally oriented construct (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003), people have multiple attachment schemas activated by different attachment figures, including supportive and nonsupportive ones (Pierce & Lydon, 1998). As such, priming participants with relationships to specific attachment figures can activate these relational schemas, potentially generating temporary attachment patterns. Future research should therefore explore the extent to which experimentally manipulated attachment patterns can alter consumers' propensities to use market-based social assistance to support causal claims.

REFERENCES

- Ahir, H., Bloom, N., & Furceri, D. (2018). The World Uncertainty Index. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3275033>
- Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1989). Attachments beyond infancy. *American Psychologist*, 44(4), 709–716. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.4.709>
- Ainsworth, M. D. S. (Ed.). (2014). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation* (digital print). Psychology Press.
- Amato, P. R. (2010). Research on Divorce: Continuing Trends and New Developments. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(3), 650–666. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00723.x>
- Buckley, L.-A. (2018). Autonomy and prenuptial agreements in Ireland: A relational analysis. *Legal Studies*, 38(1), 164–186. <https://doi.org/10.1017/lst.2017.11>
- Campbell, L., & Marshall, T. (2011). Anxious Attachment and Relationship Processes: An Interactionist Perspective. *Journal of Personality*, 79(6), 1219–1250. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2011.00723.x>
- Ceglian, C. P., & Gardner, S. (1999). Attachment Style: A Risk for Multiple Marriages? *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 31(1–2), 125–139. https://doi.org/10.1300/J087v31n01_07
- Clark, M. S., & Aragón, O. R. (2013). Communal (and other) relationships: History, theory development, recent findings, and future directions. In J. A. Simpson & L. Campbell (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of close relationships* (pp. 255–280). Oxford University Press.

- Clark, M. S., Lemay, E. P. J., Graham, S. M., Pataki, S. P., & Finkel, E. J. (2010). Ways of giving benefits in marriage: Norm use, relationship satisfaction, and attachment-related variability. *Psychological Science, 21*(7), 944–951. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797610373882>
- Clark, M. S., & Mills, J. (1993). The Difference between Communal and Exchange Relationships: What it is and is Not. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 19*(6), 684–691. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167293196003>
- Fiske, A. P. (1992). The four elementary forms of sociality: Framework for a unified theory of social relations. *Psychological Review, 99*(4), 689–723. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.99.4.689>
- Fiske, A. P., & Haslam, N. (2005). The Four Basic Social Bonds: Structures for Coordinating Interaction. In M. W. Baldwin (Ed.), *Interpersonal cognition* (pp. 267–298). The Guilford Press.
- Fraley, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000). An item response theory analysis of self-report measures of adult attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*(2), 350. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.78.2.350>
- Friesen, J. P., Kay, A. C., Eibach, R. P., & Galinsky, A. D. (2014). Seeking structure in social organization: Compensatory control and the psychological advantages of hierarchy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 106*(4), 590–609. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035620>
- Furnham, A., & Marks, J. (2013). Tolerance of Ambiguity: A Review of the Recent Literature. *Psychology, 04*(09), 717–728. <https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2013.49102>
- Gallus, J., Reiff, J., Kamenica, E., & Fiske, A. P. (2021). Relational incentives theory. *Psychological Review, 129*(3), 586–602. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000336>
- Gasiorowska, A., Chaplin, L. N., Zaleskiewicz, T., Wygrab, S., & Vohs, K. D. (2016). Money Cues Increase Agency and Decrease Prosociality Among Children: Early Signs of Market-Mode Behaviors. *Psychological Science, 27*(3), 331–344. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797615620378>
- Gasiorowska, A., & Zaleskiewicz, T. (2021). Trading in search of structure: Market relationships as a compensatory control tool. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 120*(2), 300–334. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000246>
- Gasiorowska, A., & Zaleskiewicz, T. (2022). Can We Get Social Assistance Without Losing Agency? Engaging in Market Relationships as an Alternative to Searching for Help from Others. *Psychological Inquiry, 33*(1), 38–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2022.2037998>
- Gasiorowska, A., & Zaleskiewicz, T. (2023). Attachment orientations moderate people's preferences for market versus communal relationships under a control threat. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 02654075231173460*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075231173460>
- Halawa, M., & Olcoń-Kubicka, M. (2018). Digital householding: Calculating and moralizing domestic life through homemade spreadsheets. *Journal of Cultural Economy, 11*(6), 514–534. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2018.1486728>
- Härkönen J. Divorce: Trends, Patterns, Causes, and Consequences. In: *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Families*. (Treas J, Scott J, Richards M. eds) Wiley; 2014; pp. 303–322. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118374085.ch15>
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*(3), 511–524. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.52.3.511>
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. R. (1994). Attachment as an Organizational Framework for Research on Close Relationships. *Psychological Inquiry, 5*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli0501_1
- Kahneman, D. (2003). Maps of Bounded Rationality: Psychology for Behavioral Economics. *The American Economic Review, 93*(5), 1449–1475.
- Kay, A. C., Gaucher, D., Napier, J. L., Callan, M. J., & Laurin, K. (2008). God and the government: Testing a compensatory control mechanism for the support of external systems. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 95*(1), 18–35. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.95.1.18>
- Kay, A. C., Whitson, J. A., Gaucher, D., & Galinsky, A. D. (2009). Compensatory Control: Achieving Order Through the Mind, Our Institutions, and the Heavens. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 18*(5), 264–268. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2009.01649.x>
- Keren, G., & Gerritsen, L. E. M. (1999). On the robustness and possible accounts of ambiguity aversion. *Acta Psychologica, 103*(1), 149–172. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-6918\(99\)00034-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-6918(99)00034-7)
- Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Davis, K. E. (1994). Attachment style, gender, and relationship stability: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66*(3), 502–512. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.66.3.502>
- Kochhar, R. (2017). Relationship Between Attachment Styles and Willingness to Sign Prenuptial Agreements. *Meliora: International Journal of Student Sustainability Research, 1*(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.22493/Meliora.1.1.0004>
- Laurin, K., Kay, A. C., & Moscovitch, D. A. (2008). On the belief in God: Towards an understanding of the emotional substrates of compensatory control. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 44*(6), 1559–1562. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2008.07.007>
- Leone, L., Giacomantonio, M., Williams, R., & Michetti, D. (2018). Avoidant attachment style and conspiracy ideation. *Personality and Individual Differences, 134*, 329–336. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.06.043>
- Margulies, S. (2003). The psychology of prenuptial agreements. *Journal of Psychiatry & Law, 31*(4), 415–432.
- McGraw, A. P., & Tetlock, P. E. (2005). Taboo Trade-Offs, Relational Framing, and the Acceptability of Exchanges. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 15*(1), 2–15. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1501_2
- Mickelson, K. D., Kessler, R. C., & Shaver, P. R. (1997). Adult attachment in a nationally representative sample. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*(5), 1092–1106. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.73.5.1092>
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2003). The Attachment Behavioral System In Adulthood: Activation, Psychodynamics, And Interpersonal Processes. In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 35, pp. 53–152). Elsevier. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(03\)01002-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(03)01002-5)
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2017). *Attachment in adulthood: Structure, dynamics, and change* (Second edition). Guilford Press.
- Milyavsky, M., Kruglanski, A. W., Gelfand, M., Chernikova, M., Ellenberg, M., & Pierro, A. (2022). People Who Need People (and Some Who Think They Don't): On Compensatory Personal and Social Means of Goal Pursuit. *Psychological Inquiry, 33*(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2022.2037986>
- Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., & Collins, N. L. (2006). Optimizing assurance: The risk regulation system in relationships. *Psychological Bulletin, 132*(5), 641–666. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.5.641>
- Palan, S., & Schitter, C. (2018). Prolific.ac—A subject pool for online experiments. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance, 17*, 22–27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbef.2017.12.004>
- Pierce, T., & Lydon, J. (1998). Priming relational schemas: Effects of contextually activated and chronically accessible interpersonal expectations on responses to a stressful event. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*(6), 1441–1448. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.75.6.1441>
- Rai, T. S., & Fiske, A. P. (2011). Moral psychology is relationship regulation: Moral motives for unity, hierarchy, equality, and proportionality. *Psychological Review, 118*(1), 57–75. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021867>
- Rodriguez, L. M., DiBello, A. M., Øverup, C. S., & Neighbors, C. (2015). The Price of Distrust: Trust, Anxious Attachment, Jealousy, and Partner Abuse. *Partner Abuse, 6*(3), 298–319. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.6.3.298>
- Rudgard, O. (2017, December 25). One in four couples who consider pre-nuptial agreements do not go through with wedding, figures show. *The Telegraph*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/12/25/one-four-couples-consider-pre-nuptial-agreements-do-not-go-wedding/>
- Shepherd, S., Kay, A. C., Landau, M. J., & Keefer, L. A. (2011). Evidence for the specificity of control motivations in worldview

- defense: Distinguishing compensatory control from uncertainty management and terror management processes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 47(5), 949–958. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2011.03.026>
- Smith, I. (2003). The Law and Economics of Marriage Contracts. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 17(2), 201–226. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6419.00193>
- Sullivan, D., Landau, M. J., & Rothschild, Z. K. (2010). An existential function of enemyship: Evidence that people attribute influence to personal and political enemies to compensate for threats to control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98(3), 434–449. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017457>
- Thomsen, L., Sidanius, J., & Fiske, A. P. (2007). Interpersonal leveling, independence, and self-enhancement: A comparison between Denmark and the US, and a relational practice framework for cultural psychology. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 37(3), 445–469. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.366>
- Vicary, A. M., & Fraley, R. C. (2007). Choose Your Own Adventure: Attachment Dynamics in a Simulated Relationship. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33(9), 1279–1291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167207303013>
- Wang, C.-T. L., & Schofer, E. (2018). Coming Out of the Penumbra: World Culture and Cross-National Variation in Divorce Rates. *Social Forces*, 97(2), 675–704.
- Whitson, J. A., & Galinsky, A. D. (2008). Lacking Control Increases Illusory Pattern Perception. *Science*, 322(5898), 115–117. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1159845>
- Zaki, J., Neumann, E., & Baltiansky, D. (2021). Market Cognition: How Exchange Norms Alter Social Experience. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 30(3), 236–241. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721421995492>
- Zaleskiewicz, T., & Gasiorowska, A. (2017). The psychological consequences of money for economic and social relationships. In C. V. Jansson-Boyd & M. J. Zawisza (Eds.), *Routledge international handbook of consumer psychology*. (pp. 312–326). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Zaleskiewicz, T., Gasiorowska, A., Kuzminska, A. O., Korotusz, P., & Tomczak, P. (2020). Market mindset impacts moral decisions: The exposure to market relationships makes moral choices more utilitarian by means of proportional thinking. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 50, 1500–1522. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2701>