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Review of the Doctoral Dissertation Submitted by Ms. Maryam Khan

**“The Psychology of Trust in Different Relational Contexts: The Roles of
Emotions and Control in Communal Sharing and Market Pricing
Relationships”**

Prepared under the supervision of Professor Agata Gąsiorowska, PhD, DSc,
and Dr Anna Kuzmińska.

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The dissertation submitted by Ms. Maryam Khan examines the psychological specificity of trust across different relational contexts. The author focuses on how trust operates within communal sharing (CS) and market pricing (MP) relationships, examining the roles of emotions and control in shaping trust-related behavior. The overarching aim of the project is to determine whether trust is a universal phenomenon or whether it takes different forms and relies on distinct psychological mechanisms depending on the nature of the social relationship.

The dissertation has been prepared as a series of scientific articles comprising three complementary lines of inquiry: a meta-analysis of studies

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using the Trust Game paradigm, a systematic review of the literature on the role of emotions in trust, and a series of experiments investigating the relationship between trust and control across different relational models. All articles have been published or accepted for publication in peer-reviewed international journals.

The dissertation consists of an introductory chapter outlining the project's theoretical foundations, sections presenting the individual articles along with their methodologies and findings, a general discussion, and an overview of the study's limitations and directions for future research. The empirical studies were conducted on large, diverse samples drawn from multiple countries and collectively involved several thousand participants. The project was carried out in accordance with high methodological standards, including preregistration of hypotheses, statistical power analyses, and the use of advanced analytical techniques.

The purpose of this review is to evaluate the dissertation in light of the statutory requirements specified in Article 187 of the Polish Law on Higher Education and Science. A doctoral dissertation should provide an original solution to a scientific problem, demonstrate the candidate's theoretical knowledge, and attest to their ability to conduct independent research. Having carefully examined the dissertation, I conclude that Ms. Maryam Khan's dissertation meets these criteria.

Strengths of the Project

The timeliness and significance of the research topic deserve particular emphasis. Trust is one of the fundamental constructs in social and economic psychology, yet it remains a highly complex phenomenon that manifests itself



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differently across relational contexts. By drawing on Fiske's Relational Models Theory and examining the psychological mechanisms characteristic of communal and market relationships, the doctoral candidate undertakes an ambitious attempt to understand the nature of trust. This perspective is particularly valuable because it conceptualizes trust as a phenomenon embedded within specific social norms and interactional contexts.

Another clear strength of the project is its broad scope and multimethod design. The dissertation combines a meta-analysis, a systematic review of the literature, and a series of preregistered experiments. This research program enables the phenomenon under investigation to be examined from multiple perspectives and demonstrates the candidate's considerable methodological maturity. Equally commendable is the consistent effort to triangulate methods and seek convergent evidence across multiple data sources.

The methodological rigor of the dissertation represents one of its strongest aspects. The individual studies were carefully designed and conducted on large samples comprising participants from diverse countries and cultural backgrounds. The candidate employs preregistration, statistical power analyses, multilevel analyses, and latent variable modeling. This commitment to transparency and adherence to contemporary standards of open science should be regarded as one of the dissertation's major assets.

The dissertation also deserves recognition for its attempt to integrate several lines of research. The author brings together literature on relational models, trust, emotions, and control, demonstrating that similar trust-related behaviors may emerge from different underlying psychological processes. Particularly intriguing are the findings suggesting that both communal and



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market relationships may give rise to trusting behavior, although they may do so through distinct psychological pathways.

Limitations and Weaknesses of the Project

Despite its considerable merits, the dissertation is not without limitations. First, the level of theoretical novelty warrants some reflection. The candidate repeatedly argues that trust is not a unitary phenomenon and takes different forms in communal and market relationships. However, many of the dissertation's central claims are largely consistent with existing literature. It has long been recognized that trust may be grounded in both emotional identification and concern for the other person, as well as in calculation and strategic anticipation of benefits. Likewise, previous research has demonstrated that emotions and control play different roles in close versus more formalized relationships. In this respect, the dissertation's primary contribution lies in integrating and empirically refining existing knowledge rather than in proposing a qualitatively new theory of trust.

Some reservations also concern the strength of the conclusions regarding the specificity of trust in communal and market relationships. The findings of the meta-analysis indicate that both relational contexts lead to similar trust-related behaviors, even though they may arise from different psychological antecedents. Consequently, the data presented in the dissertation convincingly demonstrate the contextual determinants of trust, but they do not unequivocally establish that trust constitutes qualitatively distinct psychological processes across relational contexts. In my view, the findings provide stronger support for the claim that trust has different antecedents than for the claim that its fundamental nature differs across relational models.



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Another limitation of the project is the lack of a clearly articulated theoretical model specifying the proposed mechanisms. The discussion repeatedly refers to different pathways to trust in communal and market relationships, yet these mechanisms are not directly subjected to empirical examination. The dissertation does not propose a model that could determine the relative contributions of emotions, calculative considerations, and relational norms to trust-related behavior. This appears to be a missed opportunity, as such a model might have constituted the project's most original theoretical contribution.

As a close-relationships researcher, I also have reservations about the pronounced distinction between communal and market relationships, which at times suggests that the two forms of relating are based on entirely separate psychological mechanisms. One of the most influential theories of close relationships – Thibaut and Kelley's Social Exchange Theory – holds that even highly intimate relationships are, to some extent, grounded in evaluations of rewards and costs and in comparisons with available alternatives. Contemporary relationship research similarly indicates that care, attachment, and communal norms coexist with processes involving reciprocity, investment, and anticipated benefits. It is therefore regrettable that the dissertation devotes relatively little attention to this line of research and does not engage more deeply with the possibility that communal and market relationships are not mutually exclusive categories but rather reflect different proportions of co-occurring emotional and calculative motives. Incorporating this perspective could have yielded a more nuanced and theoretically richer model of trust.

The second article included in the dissertation also leaves some room for reflection. Although the systematic review provides a valuable synthesis of

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existing findings, it does not contribute new empirical evidence and relies partly on the author's own categorization of studies into communal and market relationships. Compared with the carefully executed meta-analysis and experimental studies, its contribution appears somewhat more modest.

Finally, some questions may be raised regarding the operationalization of relational models. In several studies, communal and market relationships were activated through relatively simple situational manipulations, such as the "Friendship Task" and the "Wall Street Task." It remains unclear whether these manipulations genuinely activate fundamentally distinct relational models or merely influence participants' interpretation of a specific situation. Although this limitation does not undermine the reported findings, it does call for caution in their interpretation and generalization.

Conclusion

In my opinion, Ms. Maryam Khan's doctoral dissertation is a rigorous and carefully executed research project. The candidate has demonstrated strong knowledge of the relevant literature, a high level of methodological competence, and the ability to design and conduct complex research programs. The dissertation makes a valuable contribution to the literature on trust and social relationships and provides a solid foundation for future theoretical and empirical developments in this field.

Although the dissertation has certain limitations, particularly regarding its level of theoretical novelty and the articulation of the underlying mechanisms of trust, these limitations do not diminish its overall scientific value. On the contrary, they point to promising directions for further research and underscore the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation.



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In conclusion, I find that the doctoral dissertation submitted by Ms. Maryam Khan satisfies all the requirements set forth in Article 187 of the Polish Law on Higher Education and Science (Act of 20 July 2018) for the award of the doctoral degree. Therefore, I recommend that Ms. Maryam Khan be admitted to the subsequent stages of the doctoral proceedings.



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