

# DISSERTATION DEFENSE

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## **Bad Deeds for Good Friends: Maintaining Independence and Objectivity in the Workplace**

In this dissertation, I investigate how and when close relationships interfere with obligations to remain objective in the workplace. First, I suggest that breakdowns in objectivity can be explained by a psychological mechanism known as “psychological closeness”—that is, feeling attached and connected to another person or people. I build upon this argument by suggesting that certain individuals are more susceptible to the negative effects of psychological closeness than others. Specifically, I argue that those who define and view themselves in terms of their close relationships—otherwise known as high “relational-interdependent self-construal (RSC)” —are most vulnerable to objectivity failures that help psychologically close others.

I investigated the relationships among RSC, psychological closeness, and failures to remain objective across four experimental studies. In Study 1, I tested whether psychological closeness to another person led to objectivity failures using a laboratory experiment in which interactions between individuals who knew each other well (i.e., were psychologically close) were compared to interactions between individuals who did not know each other well (i.e., were not psychologically close). Results showed that individuals were more likely to commit objectivity failures to help another person when they were high (vs. low) in psychological closeness to that person. As hypothesized, this effect was stronger for individuals high (vs. low) in RSC.

In Study 2, I sought to replicate the findings from Study 1 and build upon its limitations by testing whether experimentally manipulated psychological closeness predicted objectivity failures. Evidence was found for this relationship; however, the results failed to provide support for the moderating role of RSC. Lastly, in Studies 3 and 4, I continued to explore RSC and its relation to the theoretical model in two online experiments. In Study 4, I also tested a potential solution to the problem of psychological closeness by temporarily reducing levels of RSC. Results from these studies did not reveal significant findings for RSC, suggesting that this personality trait may not be influential in determining how people respond to feelings of psychological closeness. Overall, this dissertation contributes to research in psychology and organizational behavior by offering insights about how close relationships and personality influence decision making in the workplace.