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HIERARCHIES OF ATTACHMENT RELATIONSHIPS IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD

Shanna J. Trinke & Kim Bartholomew
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ABSTRACT
This study examined the characteristics of attachment hierarchies in young adulthood. Multiple components were used to assess attachment bonds: using the attachment figure as a safe haven in times of distress, using him or her as a secure base from which to venture out independently, having a strong emotional tie with the person regardless of whether the tie is positive, negative, or mixed, seeking to be in close proximity to the person, and mourning the loss of the person. The Attachment Network Questionnaire (ANQ) was developed to measure multiple adult attachment relationships and to examine the characteristics of attachment hierarchies. 223 university students completed the ANQ by listing their significant relationships and then ranking these persons in terms of the various components of attachment. A subset of the participants was followed up to examine the one month test-retest reliability of the ANQ. Young adult participants were found, on average, to have 5.38 attachment figures, including family members, romantic partners, and friends. The figures identified included both secure and insecure attachments. In addition, the ANQ demonstrated adequate test-retest reliability over one month.

KEY WORDS • attachment • close relationships • social networks

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With whom do adults form attachments? What defines someone as an attachment figure? Throughout Bowlby’s work, five components are considered to be crucial in constituting an attachment bond: using the attachment figure as a safe haven in times of distress, using him or her as a secure base from which to venture out independently, having a strong emotional tie with the person regardless of whether the tie is positive, negative, or mixed, seeking to be in close proximity to the person, and mourning the loss of the person. These categories overlap with components identified by other researchers as well (e.g. Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Weiss, 1982).

A recent examination of adults’ primary attachment figures was carried out by Hazan & Zeifman (1994). Their findings indicated that these attachments are formed almost exclusively with romantic partners. We expanded their focus to examine the possibility that young adults have multiple attachment figures. Specifically, we expected that many adults have more than one attachment relationship and that attachments need not involve a sexual component. Therefore, we developed and validated a measure to assess multiple adult attachments and to examine the characteristics of adult attachment hierarchies.

Bowlby (1980) first proposed that attachment is a ‘class of behavior with its own dynamic’ (p. 39) distinct from, yet as important as, feeding and sexual mating. Much of his early theorizing was focused on parent–child relationships, but he maintained that attachment behaviors and bonds are ‘present and active throughout the life cycle’ (Bowlby, 1979/1977: 39). Attachment research was first carried out with infants and children (e.g. Ainsworth et al., 1978), and was subsequently extended to cover adults as well (e.g. Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Early research restricted its focus to mothers as children’s attachment figures (e.g. Ainsworth et al., 1978). Shortly thereafter, researchers began routinely assessing both mothers and fathers (e.g. Main & Weston, 1981) and, more recently, other adults such as daycare workers and caregivers on a kibbutz (e.g. Oppenheim et al., 1988). It may be adaptive for children to have several figures who fulfill various attachment functions in different situations (e.g. Howes et al., 1988; Main & Weston, 1981; Oppenheim et al., 1988). For example, Howes et al. (1988) demonstrated that having a secure attachment to at least one caregiver can compensate for other insecure attachments in terms of the child’s ability to interact with peers and other caregivers. Although research has not directly examined the characteristics of children’s attachments networks, these attachments have been postulated to be arranged in a hierarchy (e.g. Bretherton, 1985). An attachment hierarchy is one’s collection of others arranged according to whom the individual prefers to orient toward for various components of attachment.

Although the general characteristics of attachment bonds are expected to continue from infancy and childhood to adulthood, Weiss (1982) identified three major differences between child and adult attachments. First, adult attachments are reciprocal and formed between peers, whereas parent–child attachments are unbalanced in terms of caregiving and care-
receiving. Second, in adulthood, attachment behavior cannot as easily overwhelm other behavioral systems as it does in infancy. Adults can survive longer separations from their attachment figures and suppress overt attachment behaviors to a greater extent, thus making the accurate observation and measurement of adult attachment behaviors more difficult. Finally, Weiss states that adult attachments are often directed toward a sexual partner. In healthy parent–child bonds, this is obviously not the case.

When considering young adults’ attachment figures, two separate but related issues need to be addressed. First, do adults have primarily one attachment figure and, if so, is that person a sexual partner? Hazan & Zeifman (1994) argue that ‘beyond infancy, attachments are formed almost exclusively with sexual partners’ (p. 152), and that ‘in the course of normative development, sex becomes an integral part of attachment’ (p. 154). Weiss (1982), in contrast, suggested that while adults may often have romantic partners as attachment figures, ‘there is no necessary connection [between sexual contact and attachment] and attachments may well be unaccompanied by either manifest or latent sexual desire’ (p. 180).

Second, if adult attachment figures are not necessarily romantic partners, the question remains: Who constitutes these attachment figures? Bowlby (1979/1977) suggested that, although adult attachment figures may often be spouses, they could also include parents and, surprisingly frequently, children. Ainsworth (1989) also recognized the diversity of adult attachments, suggesting the bonds could include continuing attachments to parents as well as attachments to siblings, mentors, friends, and others. It is likely that repeated contact with an appropriate other at any time during the life cycle could lead to the formation of a new attachment bond. Furthermore, if a child grows up with multiple attachment figures, it is reasonable to expect this pattern to be maintained into adulthood. However, the presence of multiple attachment figures for adults still requires empirical validation.

If adults have multiple figures, are they arranged in a hierarchy? Does this hierarchy change over time? Hazan & Zeifman (1994) recently examined the characteristics of adult attachment bonds by focusing on primary attachment figures and how individuals’ orientation toward various persons shifts over time. In their community sample of 120 adults, they found that ‘full-blown attachments are almost exclusively limited to parents or romantic partners’ (p. 161). When participants were either not in relationships or were in short-term relationships, their primary attachment figures were usually parents. However, by 2 years nearly all romantic relationships had the characteristics of full-blown reciprocal attachments. From this, Hazan & Zeifman concluded that the primary attachment figures for adults in romantic relationships of at least 2 years’ duration are their romantic partners. Although they state that multiple attachments are hypothesized to be arranged in a hierarchical manner and that parents tend to be permanent figures of the hierarchy, they claim that, beyond infancy, new attachments are formed almost exclusively with sexual partners.
The present study

The present study explores the organization of attachment hierarchies of young adults. This research builds on Hazan & Zeifman's (1994) work in two ways. First, Hazan & Zeifman asked participants to name only one person who fulfilled various attachment functions, thus shedding light on the characteristics of primary attachment figures, but not the rest of the attachment hierarchy. In contrast, our Attachment Network Questionnaire (ANQ) asked participants to list as many people as they felt were important to them.

Second, Hazan & Zeifman's measurement of attachment may have focused more on secure attachment bonds (making effective use of the attachment figures) than on the actual presence of an attachment. Their questions probed for individuals who were actively sought to meet participants' needs (e.g. 'Whom do you turn to for comfort when you're upset, feeling down, etc.?') and who successfully met these needs (e.g. 'Whom do you feel you can always count on, know will be available if needed, etc.?'). However, when conducting and coding attachment interviews, we often encounter participants who refrain from seeking contact with significant others to whom they are clearly attached. Based on these experiences, we speculated that Hazan & Zeifman's measure may have missed figures that the participants would have wanted to approach to meet their needs but were afraid to. Therefore, Hazan & Zeifman's measure may have been less likely to identify insecure than secure attachment relationships. Consistent with this hypothesis, Hazan & Zeifman reported that when children and adolescents were classified as insecurely attached to their parents, they were more likely to list peers over parents as their primary attachment figures. This finding does not necessarily indicate that the children are no longer attached to their parents, but that their primary secure attachment figure is a peer. Therefore, the ANQ asks both about such approach-oriented behaviors and attachment desires that are not necessarily followed through, thus identifying an orientation toward a figure regardless of whether the figure meets the individual's needs.

In the present study we attempted to clarify the characteristics of attachment hierarchies of young adults by measuring the number and relative position of attachment relationships, regardless of the security of any given attachment bond. The ANQ defines an attachment bond in terms of the components that Bowlby identified: safe haven, secure base, proximity-seeking, emotional tie, and potential object of mourning (see Appendix for the list of items). Participants list the important relationships in their lives and rank these individuals in the order that the particular attachment components apply to them. These components include two key attachment functions assessed by Hazan & Zeifman (1994): safe haven behavior and secure base behavior. Two 'approach' attachment items — who participants can count on and who they go to when upset — overlap on Hazan & Zeifman's measure and the ANQ. In addition, participants are asked who they would like to be able to count on (secure base) and go to (safe haven). Thus, the ANQ distinguishes between wanting to and actually using the figure to fulfill attachment functions.

Several characteristics of the ANQ were examined. First, its internal consistency was tested in terms of how the items group together on a general scale for attachment. It was expected that the ANQ items would be correlated with each other and with the overall scale. On the other hand, several of the items (such as the hypothetical impact of a person's death and being made
upset) were more exploratory in terms of content and/or specific wording, and, therefore, the expected degree of correlation of these items with the rest was not clear.

Second, the one-month test–retest reliability of the ANQ was examined. Analyses focused on the composition of the attachment network in terms of size, typical figures, and the ordering of the hierarchy. Participants were also asked to report major relationship-related life events occurring in the intervening period that may have affected their attachment networks. Data from participants reporting substantial changes in the intervening month were compared with those from participants reporting little or no change.

Third, based on the judgments of a rater, it was decided whether each of the listed persons qualified as an attachment figure. This judgment was then compared with an empirical method for identifying attachment relationships.

Adolescence and young adulthood are the periods during which individuals are expected to expand their attachment hierarchies to include peers as well as family members. A growing body of literature indicates that peers (including friends and romantic partners) become increasingly important as sources of support and intimacy from early to late adolescence, while parents continue to be key sources of support through at least young adulthood (e.g. Buhrmester & Furman, 1987; Paterson et al., 1994). Moreover, the quality of attachment to both parents and peers appears to be predictive of psychological well-being during young adulthood (e.g. Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Blain et al., 1993; Kenny & Rice, 1995). Based on this work, we expected that most young adults would have more than one attachment figure and that attachments would not be limited to sexual partners.

To make a prediction regarding the number of attachments expected, we looked to social networks research. Social networks may be defined in a variety of ways ranging from broad (the total number of people with whom one interacts) to narrow (a network of significant others or intimates) (Milardo, 1992). In contrast to broad definitions of social networks, networks of intimates likely overlap to a great extent with attachment networks and may at times be even less inclusive than networks of attachments. Extrapolating from this literature (e.g. Kim & Stiff, 1991; Milardo, 1992), we predicted that the average number of attachments would be between three and six.

Hazan & Zeifman (1994) found that most adults in romantic relationships of approximately 2 years or longer list their partners as their primary attachment figure. Similarly, we expected that partners would be ranked at the top of attachment hierarchies for young adults in long-term relationships. Also in line with Hazan & Zeifman’s findings, we predicted that parents would play a more prominent role in fulfilling the attachment needs of younger and/or single individuals and, therefore, would typically be at the top of these participants’ hierarchies. Finally, regardless of age or romantic status, it was expected that parents would be present as attachment figures for most participants.

Hazan & Zeifman’s (1994) research showed that individuals reported using figures differently for the various components of attachment. In particular, they found that young adults in a transitional stage of life were in the process of shifting from using parents to relying on peers first for safe haven and then for secure base attachment functions. Therefore, we predicted that parents would be ranked more highly for secure base than for safe haven functions and that peers would be ranked more highly for safe haven than for secure base functions.
We expected that security of attachment would be more strongly related to actually using attachment figures than to wanting to be able to use them. Security is partly defined by individuals actually going to and counting on people, and therefore we expected a strong correlation between attachment security and actually using attachment figures. In contrast, whereas security of attachment would be expected to correlate with wanting to and particularly with actually using an attachment figure, we would not necessarily expect insecurity to correlate with not wanting to use the figure. For example, fearful-avoidant persons would be likely to want their attachment figures to fulfill their needs, but would not be apt to approach these figures for fear of rejection (Bartholomew, 1990).

Social support measures can be categorized according to three models: (a) the network model which focuses on social integration and interconnectedness of individuals; (b) the received support model which focuses on support actually received; and (c) the perceived support model which looks at support believed to be available to the individual if it is needed (Sarason et al., 1990). In the present study, a measure of perceived close emotional support, the SSQ–Short Form, adapted from Sarason et al.'s (1987) measure, was included in order to compare social support and attachment networks. The Sarason et al. questionnaire assesses the perceived number of available social supports as well as overall satisfaction with these supports. This social support measure thus focuses on satisfying relationships and is less inclusive than the ANQ which allows for the identification of figures that may leave support needs unfulfilled.

Given the theoretical differences between the two constructs as well as the methodological differences in the way the two measures are designed, we expected the number of attachment figures to be moderately but not highly correlated with the number of social supports perceived to be available. Furthermore, exploratory analyses were planned to examine the relationship of attachment security with social support and attachment bonds to help clarify differences between the two constructs.

Method
The sample consisted of 240 undergraduates who volunteered to participate in partial fulfillment of course requirements. Seventeen participants were dropped because they failed to follow experimental instructions and incorrectly completed the ANQ. The final sample consisted of 93 male and 130 female participants. Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 45 years; the mean age was 21.2 years (SD = 4.21), and 95 percent of the participants were under 30. Of the total sample, 49 percent reported being in a current romantic relationship. The average relationship length for participants currently in relationships was 28 months (SD = 29.99), with a range from 1 to 168 months. A subset of 72 individuals was followed up about one month after the initial testing.

Participants were tested in groups of 7–15. They completed a questionnaire package which began with the ANQ. The experimenter provided the participants with an overview of the procedure, guided the group through the instructions for filling out the ANQ, and demonstrated examples of how to complete the rankings (available from authors). Participants then completed the ANQ and the remaining components of the questionnaire package at their own pace. At the end of the booklet, participants were given the choice to volunteer for a follow-up study by writing down their names and phone
numbers. Of the total sample, 71 percent volunteered to return for future research. No differences in demographic characteristics were found between those who volunteered for the follow-up study and those who did not. A random sample of interested participants was contacted by phone to schedule a second session a month later. At the follow-up session, participants completed the ANQ a second time.

The ANQ records multiple attachment figures. Participants list the ‘significant people in your life, those people that you currently feel a strong emotional tie to, regardless of whether that tie is positive, negative, or mixed’. After providing demographic information about these individuals, participants rank them in the order that they would use them (or would like to use them) for various attachment components (see Appendix). Because of its complexity and the length of time required to complete the ANQ, only one item was chosen to measure each component (or aspect of a component in the case of safe haven and secure base). The criteria for item selection were face validity, adequate coverage of each attachment component, and clarity of expression. Each item was evaluated by a group of experts in the field of attachment and modified where necessary. The ANQ was then piloted on 73 university students to refine administration procedures.

Six specific aspects of attachment are assessed: (a) safe haven (see Items A and B in Appendix); (b) secure base (Items C and D); (c) proximity-seeking (Item E); (d) mourning after hypothetical loss (Item F); (e) conflict and strong emotion (Item G); and (f) degree of emotional connection felt toward each person listed (Item H). The inclusion of an item dealing with conflictual emotion was an attempt to override defenses that may cause participants to deny the importance of insecure attachments. After listing their important relationships, participants rank in order of importance only the individuals relevant to each item (except for Item H, the degree of emotional connection). For example, if they only get upset with three of the ten persons they listed as important relationships, they would only rank these three individuals for item G. For Item H, they are instructed to rank everyone on their list. Participants are told that ties in their rankings are not permitted.

Participants’ attachment security was assessed using the Relationship Ques-
tionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) which is based on Bartholomew’s (1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) four-category model. The RQ consists of four brief descriptions of prototypical attachment patterns as they relate to close relationships in general. Participants are asked to rate on a 7-point scale the degree of correspondence between each prototype and their own style. The secure prototype reads as follows: ‘It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don’t worry about being alone or having others not accept me’. Participants are then asked to what degree each style is similar to the way they are in their relationships with their mother, their father, their closest platonic friend, and their romantic partner if they have one. Only the general and relationship-specific ratings of security were used in the present study.

We adapted Sarason et al.’s (1987) SSQ–Short Form measure of perceived social support. Our adaptation does not include having participants list particular people, but asks only for the number of supportive relationships available in six different contexts and the extent to which they feel satisfied with each component of this support on a 7-point scale. An example item is
How many people can you really count on to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress? How satisfied are you with this support? Responses yield scores on two scales, SSQ-N (number) and SSQ-SS (satisfaction). The SSQ-N score is the average number of people listed across the six items, and the SSQ-S score is the average satisfaction rating across the six items. The SSQ-Short Form correlates highly with the complete 27-item SSQ, indicating it is an acceptable substitute for the longer version.

At the 1-month follow-up session, after completing the ANQ, participants were asked if they had experienced any major life changes in the past month, such as any deaths, moves, or relationship break-ups or start-ups, that may have influenced their social networks. These major events were distinguished from minor events, such as changes in the amount of involvement with friends, and from no reported changes.

Results

Several preliminary comments about the analysis are in order. Data were analyzed separately for male and female participants, and very few statistically significant sex differences were found. Unless sex differences are addressed in the text, it can be assumed that the results are similar for both sexes. Second, four participants stated they were not in romantic relationships but went on to list romantic partners on the ANQ. These individuals' data were discarded from relevant analyses. Third, there was one outlying data point (approximately 9 SDs above the mean) for the number of people listed as available for social support (SSQ-N). Data were analyzed with and without this participant and the pattern of results was similar. The outlier was discarded from relevant analyses. Fourth, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated on the ranked data. Spearman rho coefficients (for ordinal data) and Pearson correlation coefficients result in the same values if there are no ties in the rankings (Myers & Well, 1991). Finally, analyses of mean differences were calculated using both paired and non-paired t-tests and Wilcoxon and Mann–Whitney procedures for rank–order data. The results of the parametric and non-parametric tests were equivalent; therefore only t-values are reported in the text.

We next assessed ANQ characteristics. Responses on items across relationships were not expected to be consistent and could not be combined to produce appropriate reliability coefficients. Separate item analyses were therefore conducted for the five relationships most commonly listed on the ANQ: mother, father, partner, best friend, and sibling. As predicted, scale reliabilities were fairly high; alpha coefficients ranged from 0.70 (best friend) to 0.90 (partner).

Inspection of the correlations between each item and the total scale (excluding the chosen item) indicated that, in general, all items were correlated with the total scale. As predicted, moderate (0.26) to relatively high (0.78) correlations were found between the items and the total scale. One exception was the item measuring the participant’s tendency to become upset (Item G) with best friends, for which the correlation was .12 with the total scale. Composite mean ranks within relationships were calculated with and without the inclusion of item G, and the two sets of rankings were highly correlated (rs ranged from .93 to .99).

The mean number of persons listed on the ANQ was 9.66 (SD = 3.16) with a
range from 2 to 18. As discussed later, not all the individuals listed on the ANQ qualify as attachment figures. Overall, participants listed a mean of 4.32 relatives (SD = 2.22), 5.36 non-relatives (SD = 2.83), 1.45 siblings (SD = 1.17), and 4.38 friends (SD = 2.56).

Rankings were assigned by the participants to the various relationships they listed, indicating the order in which they were oriented toward the figures for various attachment components. Lower numbers reflect a greater tendency to use an individual as an attachment figure and are referred to as higher rankings. On average, participants ranked partners (if they had them; M = 2.1, SD = 1.35) most highly, followed by mothers (M = 2.4, SD = 1.03), fathers (M = 3.2, SD = 1.24), siblings (M = 3.7, SD = 1.53), and best friends (M = 3.9, SD = 1.84; see Table 1). Ranks among family members were somewhat correlated; the correlation between mean ranks for mothers and fathers was .25 (d.f. = 176; p < .01) and between fathers and siblings was .22 (d.f. = 161; p < .01).

The order in which participants, on average, ranked these specific figures was the same (excluding partners) regardless of whether participants were or were not currently in romantic relationships. Nevertheless, the various mean rankings were somewhat different for the two groups: individuals not in relationships ranked mothers (t(201) = 2.01, p < .05), fathers (t(176) = 4.30, p < .001), siblings (t(183) = 3.13, p < .01), and best friends (t(209) = 3.49, p < .01) more highly than did individuals who were in relationships (see Table 1).

Not surprisingly, length of time a participant had known his or her romantic partner was significantly correlated with the partner’s overall mean rank (r(110) = -.24, p < .01) and specifically with the partner’s rank as a desired (r(105) = -.22, p < .05) and actual (r(101) = -.23, p < .05) secure base. In other words, the longer the individual had known his or her partner, the more readily the individual oriented toward the partner over others as an attachment figure, particularly to fulfill secure base functions. These data are consistent with Hazan & Zeifman’s (1994) work suggesting that over time peers (especially partners) increasingly serve secure base as well as safe haven attachment functions.

### TABLE 1
Mean rankings of various relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Overall (SD, n)</th>
<th>Participants in relationships (SD, n)</th>
<th>Participants not in relationships (SD, n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>2.1 (1.35, 107)</td>
<td>2.1 (1.35, 107)</td>
<td>Missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2.4 (1.03, 206)</td>
<td>2.5 (1.03, 98)</td>
<td>2.2 (1.03, 98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>3.2 (1.24, 182)</td>
<td>3.6 (1.27, 94)</td>
<td>2.8 (1.07, 84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling</td>
<td>3.7 (1.53, 188)</td>
<td>4.1 (1.54, 96)</td>
<td>3.4 (1.46, 89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best friend</td>
<td>3.9 (1.84, 215)</td>
<td>4.4 (1.72, 105)</td>
<td>3.5 (1.87, 106)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Lower numbers reflect a greater tendency to use these people as attachment figures.
There were a few sex differences on mean rankings of the safe haven function. Males ranked their partners more highly for desired ($t(106) = 2.89, p < .01$) and actual ($r(73) = 4.36, p < .001$) safe haven functions than did females. Males' mean ranking for desired safe haven use was 1.21 (SD = .72); females' was 1.82 (SD = 1.23). Males' mean ranking for actual safe haven use was 1.08 (SD = .27); females' was 1.75 (SD = 1.16). Perhaps females find their romantic partners less satisfying as safe havens relative to males, or females may have a greater number of figures to use as safe havens and, therefore, rely less on their male partners. In addition, males ranked wanting to use their fathers as safe havens more highly than did females ($t(99) = 2.56, p < .05$). Males' mean ranking was 3.19 (SD = 1.77); females' was 4.19 (SD = 2.12). This finding is consistent with research indicating that the relationships between adolescent females and their fathers tend to be especially distant (e.g. Paterson et al., 1994).

Given the restricted age range of the sample, it is not surprising that the age of participants did not correlate significantly with mean rankings for mothers ($r(205) = .01$, NS), fathers ($r(176) = .08$, NS), or partners ($r(104) = .15$, NS). That is, older individuals did not, for example, use parents less and partners more than younger individuals. Also, residing further away from the parental home was not significantly correlated with the mean ranks of mothers, fathers, or partners ($rs$ ranged from $-.04$ to $.12$, NS).

We predicted that family members would be more important for secure base than safe haven functions and that this pattern would be reversed for peers. Data were analyzed in two ways: numbers or proportions of participants who reported an orientation to various figures on the different attachment components, and component mean rank differences, both across components and across relationships.

First, we compared the proportions of participants who ranked the various figures on the two key attachment functions (see Table 2). As predicted, a greater proportion of individuals oriented toward family members (mothers, fathers, and siblings) for desired and actual secure base functions than for desired and actual safe haven functions ($zs$ ranged from 2.83 to 6.72, $p < .01$). Partners and best friends, on the other hand, were listed in equal proportions for safe haven and secure base functions.

When examining mean rank differences between safe haven and secure base functions, only participants with data present for both variables of interest were included (see Table 3). First, ranks were examined within the specific relationships across attachment functions. In both desired use and actual use,

**TABLE 2**

Proportions of participants orienting toward various figures for attachment functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Safe haven desired use (%)</th>
<th>Safe haven actual use (%)</th>
<th>Secure base desired use (%)</th>
<th>Secure base actual use (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best friend</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *$^a n = 110, ^b n = 223.$
TABLE 3
Component mean ranks for various figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Safe haven desired use</th>
<th>Safe haven actual use</th>
<th>Secure base desired use</th>
<th>Secure base actual use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(SD, n)</td>
<td>(SD, n)</td>
<td>(SD, n)</td>
<td>(SD, n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.09, 108)</td>
<td>(.99, 101)</td>
<td>(1.63, 105)</td>
<td>(1.74, 101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.65, 169)</td>
<td>(1.62, 150)</td>
<td>(1.41, 185)</td>
<td>(1.40, 175)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.02, 101)</td>
<td>(2.35, 74)</td>
<td>(1.49, 153)</td>
<td>(1.58, 129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.02, 110)</td>
<td>(1.82, 86)</td>
<td>(1.73, 136)</td>
<td>(1.79, 122)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best friend</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.66, 169)</td>
<td>(1.45, 150)</td>
<td>(2.10, 170)</td>
<td>(1.89, 157)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Lower numbers reflect a greater tendency to use these people as attachment figures.

peers were ranked more highly than safe haven functions than secure base functions ($t(103) = -2.82, p < .01$ for desired use of partners; $t(148) = -4.66, p < .001$ for actual use of partners; $t(148) = -6.50, p < .001$ for desired use of best friends; $t(133) = -6.85, p < .001$ for actual use of best friends). In contrast, consistent with the proportional findings, parents were ranked more highly for desired and actual secure base functions than desired and actual safe haven functions ($t(160) = 4.91, p < .001$ for desired use of mothers; $t(140) = 6.07, p < .001$ for actual use of mothers; $t(98) = 5.77, p < .001$ for desired use of fathers; $t(67) = 5.50, p < .001$ for actual use of fathers). No significant differences were found between mean ranks for actual or desired use of siblings as safe havens and secure bases.

Second, exploratory analyses were conducted to examine differences in rankings on all attachment components across relationships. (Again, only participants with complete data on relevant variables were included in the analyses.) Partners were ranked more highly than mothers, fathers, siblings, and best friends for desired and actual use as a safe haven and desired use as a secure base ($t$s ranged from 2.21 to 8.27, $p < .05$). However, ranks for actual use as a secure base were no higher for partners than for mothers and fathers. Mothers were consistently ranked more highly than fathers for desired and actual use as both safe havens and secure bases ($t$s ranged from 3.91 to 5.87, $p < .001$). Mothers and best friends were both ranked highly for desired and actual safe haven functions. Participants reported, on average, that losing their mothers would have a greater impact on them than losing any other significant other ($t$s ranged from 4.28 to 18.76, $p < .001$). They also ranked their degree of emotional connection with mothers and partners more highly than with any other individuals ($t$s ranged from 4.88 to 9.92, $p < .001$). Overall, the findings are consistent with Hazan & Zeifman's (1994) research suggesting that, over time, young adults shift from using family members (parents in particular) to using peers as safe havens. In addition, these results suggest that mothers occupy a privileged position in the hierarchies of young adults.
In summary, proportional results suggest that young adults are more likely to rely on family members as a secure base than as a safe haven, whereas they are likely to orient toward peers equally for the two functions. Component mean ranks for parents are consistent with proportional findings, indicating that parents are ranked more highly for secure base than safe haven functions. Findings for peers’ component mean rankings, however, are somewhat different from proportional results and are in line with our hypothesis: Partners and best friends are ranked more highly for safe haven than secure base functions.

Judgments were made to determine whether the relationships listed on the ANQ were attachment bonds. The two judges had extensive training in attachment theory and in coding attachment interviews. The attachment status decisions were based primarily on the number of components on which participants ranked the various individuals listed on their questionnaires, although the overall pattern of responses on the questionnaire was also taken into account. In general, to be considered attachment figures, individuals had to be ranked on a safe haven item (Item A and/or B), a secure base item (Item C and/or D), the hypothetical mourning item (Item F), as well as the emotional connection item (Item H). Proximity-seeking was not included as a criterion for the attachment judgments. We found that, consistent with Hazan & Zeifman (1994), almost all listed individuals were ranked on the item and, therefore, it was not useful in distinguishing attachment status.

Individual differences in ANQ responding were also taken into account and occasionally led to a more complicated application of the general guidelines. In some cases, participants appeared to clearly distinguish between the rankings of attachment and non-attachment relationships, even though they ranked one or more of the attachment relationships on only three of the four criteria. This pattern of responding was most often observed when one or more figures met all four criteria for an attachment relationship, a father (or other individual) was ranked highly on three of the four criteria (typically secure base, potential object of mourning, and emotional connection, but not safe haven), and all additional figures were ranked consistently low on just one or two of the criteria. In such a case, the father (or other individual) was judged to qualify as an attachment figure.

Attachment judgments were tested for interrater reliability on a subsample of 48 questionnaires. Proportion of agreement between the two raters’ attachment judgments was examined for five relationships and was found to be high. Kappa values, which control for chance agreement (Fleiss, 1981), were somewhat lower because of the high probability of attachment status for the relationships examined. Interrater agreement was for mothers 93 percent (kappa = .54), fathers 83 percent (kappa = .57), partners 100 percent (kappa = 1.0), siblings 89 percent (kappa = .78), and for best friends 95 percent (kappa = .87). The correlation between the two raters’ judged number of attachments was also high ($r = .87, p < .001$).

In most cases, several persons were easily identifiable as attachment figures, one or two were ambiguous because they fulfilled a few attachment components, and the rest were clearly not attachments. Confirming the prediction that participants would generally have between three and six attachment bonds, the mean number of judged attachment figures was 5.38 (SD = 2.19). The number ranged from one to twelve, and 69 percent of individuals were judged to have between three and six attachment bonds. Participants not in romantic relation-
ships had a mean of 5.3 (SD = 2.27) attachment figures, and participants in relationships had a mean of 5.5 (SD = 2.14) attachment figures.

Of the five important relationships listed earlier (partners, mothers, fathers, siblings, and best friends), a high proportion sufficiently fulfilled attachment components so as to be judged as attachment bonds for many of the participants. When considering all 223 participants, 85 percent were judged to be attached to their mothers, 66 percent to their fathers, 58 percent to at least one sibling, 77 percent to their best friends, and 99 percent to their partners if they reported being in a current romantic relationship. A further finding was that a higher proportion of females (84%) than males (67%) were judged to be attached to their best friends ($z = 2.96, p < .01$). No significant differences were found according to relationship status in the number of judged attachments ($t(216) = -.88, NS$) or in the likelihood of being attached to various persons ($z$s ranged from .63 to 1.63, NS).

For each participant, the listed individual with the highest composite rank was considered to be his or her primary attachment figure (see Table 4). Twelve participants did not have a distinct primary attachment, that is, the highest mean ranks involved ties between two or more relationships. Of the remaining 211 individuals, highest ranked figures were, in descending order of frequency: mothers 36 percent, partners 31 percent, best friends 14 percent, fathers 11 percent, and siblings 8 percent. Participants not in romantic relationships tended to choose primary attachment figures in differing proportions than did participants in relationships. A greater proportion of participants not in relationships ranked mothers ($z = 3.74, p < .01$), fathers ($z = 2.23, p < .05$), siblings ($z = 2.84, p < .01$), and best friends ($z = 3.47, p < .01$) at the top, whereas the majority (62%) of participants in relationships ranked partners at the top of their hierarchies.

Analyses were conducted to determine whether attachment status predicted by an empirically derived method could parallel the results obtained by a theoretical judgment. The general rule for attachment figure inclusion (outlined earlier) was used. Thus, to be identified as an attachment figure, an individual had to be listed on either Item A or B, either Item C or D, Item F, and Item H. The obtained attachment status predictions were compared with attachment judgments. Agreement was high for the five relationships examined: mothers 91 percent (kappa = .58), fathers 78 percent (kappa = .51), partners 94 percent (kappa = .21), siblings 88 percent (kappa = .75), and best friends 91 percent (kappa = .76). Any discrepancies between the two methods of determining attachment status were a result of judgments being made on a

| Table 4 |
|---|---|---|
| **Proportion of participants with various persons as highest ranked figures (%)** | **Total sample** | **Participants in romantic relationships** | **Participants not in romantic relationships** |
| | ($N = 211$) | ($N = 107$) | ($N = 104$) |
| Partner | 31 | 62 | Missing |
| Mother | 36 | 23 | 48 |
| Father | 11 | 7 | 16 |
| Sibling | 8 | 3 | 13 |
| Best friend | 14 | 6 | 22 |

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less rigid basis than the empirical decision rule. These results suggest that the simple decision rule is roughly equivalent to the judgment of raters.

A subset of 72 participants was retested on the ANQ one month after the initial session. Test–retest reliabilities were calculated with and without the 11 individuals who reported significant relationship-related life change in the intervening period. The pattern of results was similar, and therefore data are presented for all participants. Reliabilities were examined for the following variables: number of relationships listed, number of attachments, and mean rankings for various relationships.

Samples used in the calculation of t-tests only included participants with complete data at both Time 1 and Time 2. While there were no mean differences from Time 1 to Time 2 in the number of relationships listed (see Table 5), the number of attachments judged at Time 2 was slightly higher than at Time 1 (t(71) = 3.04, p < .01). Even so, there was moderate to high stability for the number of relationships listed on the ANQ and for the number of attachments.

In two cases (fathers and siblings), mean rankings for the relationships were slightly lower at Time 2 than at Time 1 (that is, figures were reported to be used less at Time 2) (t(57) = −2.77, p < .01; and t(58) = −2.47, p < .05, for fathers and siblings, respectively). Nevertheless, correlations between the two sets of mean ranks were high for every relationship: rs ranged from .74 to .93.

Participants rated their attachment security with their mothers, fathers, romantic partners, and closest platonic friends on the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ). Security ratings ranged from 1 to 7, with higher values reflecting a greater degree of reported attachment security. In general, partici-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparison of means from Time 1 to Time 2 and test–retest reliability correlations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Time 1 (SD, n)</th>
<th>Time 2 (SD, n)</th>
<th>Correlation (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of relationships listed on ANQ</td>
<td>9.94 (3.36, 72)</td>
<td>9.79 (3.28, 72)</td>
<td>.83*** (72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of relatives listed</td>
<td>4.24 (2.05, 72)</td>
<td>4.32 (1.96, 72)</td>
<td>.84*** (72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of non-relatives listed</td>
<td>5.69 (2.94, 72)</td>
<td>5.49 (2.69, 72)</td>
<td>.83*** (72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of attachments</td>
<td>5.74 (2.20, 72)</td>
<td>6.57 (2.83, 72)</td>
<td>.60*** (72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner mean rank</td>
<td>1.9 (1.90, 32)</td>
<td>1.9 (1.90, 32)</td>
<td>.93*** (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother mean rank</td>
<td>2.5 (1.04, 67)</td>
<td>2.6 (1.08, 67)</td>
<td>.74*** (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father mean rank</td>
<td>3.3 (1.29, 58)</td>
<td>3.7 (1.51, 58)</td>
<td>.75*** (58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling mean rank</td>
<td>3.8 (1.51, 59)</td>
<td>4.2 (2.02, 59)</td>
<td>.79*** (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best friend mean rank</td>
<td>3.7 (1.93, 67)</td>
<td>3.9 (1.93, 67)</td>
<td>.86*** (67)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For mean rankings, lower values indicate that participants more readily use the attachment figure for the particular function. *** p < .001.

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pants reported being less securely attached to their fathers \((M = 4.28)\) than to their mothers \((M = 5.34; t(207) = -5.76, p < .001)\), best friends \((M = 5.64; t(205) = -8.28, p < .001)\), or partners \((M = 5.91; t(107) = -6.77, p < .001)\), although moderate to high levels of security were reported on average with all four relationships. In addition, participants reported being more secure with their partners than with their mothers \((t(110) = 2.74, p < .01)\).

Correlations between attachment security and attachment function rankings were compared on the subset of participants with complete data on the variables of interest. With mothers, fathers, and partners (but not best friends) a positive relationship was found between reported degree of attachment security and ranking that person for desired and actual safe haven and secure base attachment functions (see Table 6). Furthermore, self-reports of security were consistently more highly correlated with actually using fathers \((t(117) = 2.85, p < .01)\), mothers \((t(162) = 1.51, p < .10)\), and partners \((t(90) = 2.13, p < .05)\) than wanting to use the same individuals as a secure base. The same trend was evident for the use of mothers \((t(136) = 2.00, p < .05)\) and partners \((t(91) = 1.29, p < .10)\) as a safe haven.

The perceived availability of and satisfaction with social support, as measured by the SSQ–Short Form, were compared with the orientation toward individuals as attachment figures, as measured by the ANQ. The relationship between the number of attachment figures and the number of social supports was only moderate \((r(220) = .31, p < .001)\), indicating that the two measures target different constructs to some degree. As mentioned earlier, perceived social support as measured by the SSQ–Short Form is a narrower construct than is attachment as measured by the ANQ.

Comparing the correlations of the two constructs with general attachment security further clarifies the difference between social support and attachment. Self-reported security of attachment was positively correlated with the number of persons listed as available supports on the SSQ \((r(220) = .31, p < .001)\) and with the degree of satisfaction with available supports \((r(216) = .45, p < .001)\). In contrast, security of attachment was not correlated with the number of people listed on the ANQ \((r(220) = .13, \text{NS})\) or with the number of attachments individuals were judged to have \((r(220) = .04, \text{NS})\). These findings suggest that the SSQ is more likely to target secure or successful attachments,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Desired safe haven ((n))</th>
<th>Actual safe haven ((n))</th>
<th>Desired secure base ((n))</th>
<th>Actual secure base ((n))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>(.26^{**})</td>
<td>(.40^{***})</td>
<td>(.28^{**})</td>
<td>(.41^{***})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>((103))</td>
<td>((96))</td>
<td>((101))</td>
<td>((96))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>(.18^*)</td>
<td>(.34^{***})</td>
<td>(.24^{**})</td>
<td>(.35^{***})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>((168))</td>
<td>((149))</td>
<td>((184))</td>
<td>((174))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>(.31^{***})</td>
<td>(.57^{***})</td>
<td>(.23^{***})</td>
<td>(.41^{***})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>((99))</td>
<td>((74))</td>
<td>((151))</td>
<td>((128))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best friend</td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td>(.02)</td>
<td>(.02)</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>((167))</td>
<td>((148))</td>
<td>((169))</td>
<td>((143))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *\(p < .05\); **\(p < .01\); ***\(p < .001\).
whereas the ANQ identifies attachments that may or may not satisfactorily meet an individual's needs.

**Discussion**

In this study, we developed a measure, the ANQ, to characterize hierarchies of attachment in young adulthood. The overall scale proved to have adequate internal consistency. In general, all eight items correlated moderately well to very well with the rest of the total scale. The only exception was the item measuring being upset, for which only a weak association was found between a participant's ranking of becoming upset with his or her best friend and with his or her overall ranking of the relationship. Because rankings rather than ratings of degree are used in the ANQ, it is inappropriate to infer that participants become more or less upset with friends. However, these results suggest that becoming upset plays a smaller role in individuals' rankings of best friends than other relationships.

The ANQ proved to be reliable when participants were retested one month after the initial session. Similar numbers of attachment bonds were found at Time 1 and Time 2. In addition, the same pattern of means was found, indicating that participants reported going to the same figures in the same order at both times. There were a few small but significant mean differences across time, but these findings were unexpected and need replication before any conclusions may be reached.

Issues of validity were also addressed in this study. First, the ANQ items have face validity. In constructing the attachment component items, we attempted to clearly and directly describe each theoretically derived attachment component in a single item. Second, discriminant validity was demonstrated by the differences shown between ANQ attachment status, attachment security, and social support. Third, convergence of the two methods of attachment status judgments showed that the results produced by an experienced judge and an empirical method are basically equivalent. However, future research is required to establish that attachment status as assessed by the ANQ is associated with alternate methods such as interviews or the use of situation-specific questions. For example, individuals could be asked to consider hypothetical or actual stressful experiences and to report who they would go to in those situations.

Unfortunately, the ANQ is a fairly complex questionnaire, a fact highlighted by the number of participants who failed to adequately follow instructions. Nevertheless, the complexity is necessary because measurement of attachment is not simple or one-dimensional. Future developments to the ANQ could include the rewording or exclusion of the item regarding becoming upset. The addition of a greater number of items per component could serve to increase the reliability of the measure.

It is also necessary to recognize the inherent limitations of any self-report measure. First, the ANQ is not an ideal measure of attachment hierarchies in that individuals are constrained in their use of tied rankings to facilitate data analyses. Furthermore, no information can be gained as to
the distance between figures. Second, it may be impossible for any self-
report measure to perfectly prompt participants to identify all of their
attachment figures. In particular, it is difficult to control for certain
response styles, such as a defensive nature of responding, which may lead
participants to underestimate the significance of their attachment relation-
ships. Future research could address this issue by using the ANQ in
combination with an interview measure in order to take into consideration
participants’ defensive response styles. In addition, interviews may shed
light on the differences between wanting to and actually using persons as
attachment figures, as well as clarify the impact on attachment figure status
of becoming upset with different persons.

Individuals reported approximately ten significant relationships, of
which about five were attachment bonds. Overall, participants ranked
romantic partners (if they had them) most highly as attachment figures,
followed by mothers, fathers, siblings, and best friends. The relative order
in which individuals, on average, used these specific figures as attachments
was the same (excluding partners) regardless of whether individuals were
or were not currently in romantic relationships. Also, there were no
significant differences in the number of attachment figures for individuals
in or out of romantic relationships. However, the mean rankings for
mothers, fathers, siblings, and best friends were somewhat different
according to relationship status. When partners become attachment fig-
ures, it appears as though they bump the other figures to lower places on
the hierarchy, but leave the relative positions of these other attachments
unaltered. Future research could examine the longitudinal structural
changes to the attachment hierarchy when a partner is added to one’s
existing group of attachment bonds.

Hazan & Zeifman (1994) found that older individuals and individuals in
longer romantic relationships were more likely to shift the focus of their
primary attachments from parents to peers, first for safe haven and then for
secure base functions. Results from the present study were consistent in
indicating that college students tend to orient toward peers more readily
for safe haven than for secure base functions and toward parents in the
opposite manner. Furthermore, for individuals in romantic relationships,
the longer the duration of their romantic relationships, the more likely it is
that they will look to their partners first to fulfill safe haven and secure base
attachment functions. However, age did not seem to affect the order in
which these young adults used various persons for attachment functions,
perhaps because of the restricted age range of the sample. Finally, distance
away from the parental home did not influence the relative readiness to use
parents or partners as attachment figures. This suggests that it is the nature
of the relationship, and not just proximity, that determines who individuals
orient toward as attachment figures.

Parents were almost always part of the attachment hierarchy, but it is
interesting to highlight the differences between mothers and fathers.
Mothers outranked fathers for safe haven and secure base attachment
behaviors, not only in the readiness of individuals, on average, to use them
as attachments, but also in terms of the overall proportion of participants who used mothers vs fathers. In addition, mothers were ranked the highest in terms of the potential impact of death, and were ranked with partners most highly for degree of emotional connection. Furthermore, mothers made up the greatest overall proportion of primary attachment figures. It appears as though mothers occupy a distinctive role in the attachment hierarchies of young adults.

These findings are consistent with a body of research indicating that both adolescents and young adults report feeling closer to and relying more on their mothers than on their fathers (e.g. Paterson et al., 1994). Similarly, the few studies that have compared infants’ multiple attachments indicate that they more readily turn to mothers than to fathers for their attachment needs (e.g. Bretherton, 1985; Lamb & Frodi, 1983). We speculate that mothers’ importance as attachment figures during young adulthood may stem partly from continuity from the mother–child relationship, as well as from expectations associated with the role of mothers in our society. In contrast to the reliance on mothers, participants only appeared to rely on their fathers to the extent that they felt secure in these relationships: Only one-third of the participants reported actually using their fathers as safe havens, and even within this restricted group there was a strong correlation between security with fathers and actual use of fathers as safe havens ($r = .57, p < .001$).

The present study was a normative study asking the general question of how attachment works and what the average attachment hierarchy looks like. The next step is to examine whether variations in attachment network characteristics, such as the number and ordering of attachments, have implications for individual adjustment and physical and mental health.

For an individual to be judged as an attachment figure, the general rule was that the participant had to orient toward the figure to fulfill safe haven and secure base functions, acknowledge that the loss of the figure would have some sort of impact on him or her, and report an emotional connection with the figure. Attachment judgments proved to be highly reliable. Proportion of agreement was very high between the two judges, even though kappa values did not always reflect this. Kappas were lower because the base rate of certain figures (like partners) being judged as attachments was very high (Fleiss, 1981).

Overall, the use of informed judgments and the empirical approach to judging attachment status corresponded well in identifying attachment bonds. However, in a few cases, particularly with parents, judgments were different from results obtained by the empirical approach. We looked at a random sample of 10 attachment interviews of participants for whom there was a discrepancy between the empirical approach and the judgment regarding the attachment status of a listed individual. In was apparent in every case that the individual in question, usually a father, did act as an attachment figure for the participant. Thus, ideally the process of defining attachment bonds should not be forced to adhere to inflexible criteria, even though general guidelines can usually be applied.
The findings also highlighted the usefulness of distinguishing between wanting to and actually going to an attachment figure. Participants did not report wanting to go to or to count on everyone in their social circles. For example, only 45 percent of participants reported wanting to use their fathers as a safe haven, and 16 percent of participants reported wanting to go to their fathers when feeling upset but did not actually do so. This distinction between desired and actual use allows for the identification of a more complete range of attachment figures, particularly fathers, toward whom participants were oriented more as desired than actual objects of attachment need fulfillment.

In contrast to the judgments made in the present study, Hazan & Zeifman’s (1994) method for identifying attachment figures was more restrictive. First, their method requires that individuals orient toward figures for all measured attachment components (proximity-seeking, safe haven, separation protest, and secure base) for the bond to be considered a ‘full-blown attachment’. Second, in their study, individuals were asked who they actually went to for their attachment needs. Our findings suggest that these criteria may not be inclusive enough, especially when considering fathers. Had the empirical decision rule for attachment figure identification on the ANQ been based only on actual use instead of also allowing for desired use of figures, many parents would not have been judged to be attachment figures.

The following case study illustrates the importance of flexible criteria for defining attachment relationships. ‘Amy’ is a 23-year-old university undergraduate who still lives at home with both parents. On the ANQ, she reported orienting toward her father on various attachment components even though she did not turn to him as a safe haven and only desired to, but did not actually count on him as a secure base. Furthermore, she ranked him second (after her mother) on both making her upset and potentially being affected by his death. During the Family Attachment Interview (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), she described her father as the ‘best provider, dependable, and reliable’ but ‘emotionally sterile’. Although she reported feeling much closer to her father as a child than as an adult, she said that she still wants to love him. As a result, she views her father in an idealized way and focuses with gratitude on the instrumental support he provides, all the while wishing he would be there for her emotionally as well. She reported having stopped actively seeking her father’s support and acceptance after repeated attempts were met with hostility. On the RQ (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), Amy wholeheartedly endorsed fitting the Preoccupied prototype with her father: she wants to be emotionally intimate with him, but he is reluctant to be close. This lack of closeness makes her uncomfortable and leads her to worry that he does not value her as much as she values him. From the information gathered from both interview and self-report data, it is apparent that Amy is oriented toward her father as an attachment figure, even though she does not actually go to him to meet her needs. This is a typical example of an attachment bond that could easily be missed if the inclusion criteria were more restrictive.
Although the ANQ's identification of attachment figures was carried out in a somewhat different manner from that of Hazan & Zeifman (1994), findings regarding primary attachments or highest ranking figures were generally consistent. Partners made up the majority of primary figures for participants in romantic relationships, whereas parents were more likely to be primary figures for participants not in relationships. There was a trend for participants in longer term relationships to rank partners at the top of their hierarchies. Nonetheless, the results suggest that a focus on romantic partners as attachment figures is limited: almost everyone in the current sample had more than one attachment figure, and partners were primary figures for only one-third of the individuals.

It is interesting to note that primary attachment figures identified on the ANQ differed considerably from college students' closest relationships, as defined by interdependence of activities (Berscheid et al., 1989). Berscheid et al. found that only 14–22 percent of participants identified family members as their closest relationships, whereas on the ANQ, 55 percent of participants identified family members as their primary attachment figures. These findings provide further evidence of discriminant validity and highlight the distinctions between definitions and measurement of close relationships (those individuals with whom one engages in frequent contact and a diversity of activities) and attachment figures (those persons one is oriented toward as a safe haven, secure base, potential object of mourning, and so forth).

Although there is some degree of overlap between perceived social supports and attachments (as measured by the ANQ), the constructs are not the same. The specific definition of social support in this study, as measured by the SSQ–Short Form, is similar to attachment in that both constructs target persons with whom the individual has a close emotional tie. Differences, however, may be explained in terms of variations in the two constructs' comparative relationships with attachment security. Greater security of attachment was associated with a greater number of successful or satisfying social supports perceived to be available. In contrast, degree of general security had no relation to the number of attachments participants were judged to have. These findings suggest that the SSQ tends to target secure and satisfying relationships, whereas the ANQ identifies attachment bonds that are more varied in terms of security.

To test this idea, we examined the ROQ security ratings of relationships with partners, mothers, fathers, and best friends. Whereas the majority of attachment figures identified on the ANQ represented secure attachments for participants, we found that a large minority of participants reported being insecure in one or more of the key relationships identified on the ANQ: 30 percent were insecure with mothers, 50 percent with fathers, 26 percent with best friends, and 28 percent with partners (for individuals currently in a romantic relationship). Unfortunately, because the responses on our adaptation of the SSQ–Short Form did not include identifying specific persons, a match between individuals used as social supports and as
attachments was not possible. Thus, the data cannot address the question of secure vs insecure attachments to persons considered to be social supports. However, correlations with attachment security provide an indication that social supports are associated with security to a greater extent than are attachments.

Whereas security was not correlated with number of attachments, security of attachment to a specific figure was generally more highly related to actually using than wanting to use that figure as an attachment. Although the rankings on the ‘desired use’ items were somewhat correlated with security, this finding is not surprising given the positive relationship between what people report they want and what they report they actually do. One’s number of attachments could be due to a wide variety of factors, such as sociability, circumstances, and so forth. However, given an individual’s set of attachment figures, the person to whom he or she is most likely to go may be related to his or her level of comfort with the person. Future research could also investigate the possibility that individuals may orient toward different people to fulfill differing attachment functions depending on the situation.

In summary, most young adults have multiple attachment figures, including family members, romantic partners, and friends. In particular, mothers seem to be given special status as attachment figures. When young adults become involved in romantic relationships, their partners typically move to the top of existing attachment hierarchies. Besides the addition of a partner, the same relative ordering is maintained for the other relationships. Clearly, the conceptualization and measurement of attachment relationships is complicated, and a narrow focus on partners or parents is only telling part of the story. It should be kept in mind, however, that the sample used in the present study was from a college population, and the results cannot be generalized to older adults or to participants in longer term relationships. We expect that the importance placed on parents and siblings as attachment figures may be, at least in part, a function of the age of the participants. In the future, it would be fascinating to look at the evolution of attachment hierarchies over the course of the development of a romantic relationship and throughout the life cycle.

REFERENCES


Appendix

Attachment Network Questionnaire Items

A. Whom would you want to go to, to help you feel better when something bad happens to you or you feel upset, whether or not you actually go to them? [Safe Haven Desired Use]
B. Whom do you actually go to, to help you feel better when something bad happens to you or you feel upset? [Safe Haven Actual Use]
C. Whom would you like to be able to count on to always be there for you and care about you no matter what? [Secure Base Desired Use]
D. Whom do you feel you can actually count on to always be there for you and care about you no matter what? [Secure Base Actual Use]
E. Whom is it important for you to see or talk with regularly? [Proximity Seeking]
F. Whose death would have the greatest impact or effect on you, regardless of what the effect may be? [Impact of Death]
G. Who can make you feel upset? (Remember that these are people with whom you have a personal relationship) [Conflictual Emotion]
H. Rank order all of the people on your list in terms of whom you feel most emotionally connected to, regardless of whether that connection is positive, negative, or mixed [Emotional Connection]

PLEASE RANK EVERYONE FOR THIS QUESTION.