

Stability of attachment styles across students' romantic relationships, friendships and family relations

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Research on adult attachment focused mainly on the relationship with partners. However, attachment theory predicts that attachment style once formed in childhood defines the structure and quality of later relationships to significant others, which means not only partners, but also friends and family members. We were interested in finding out whether the type of relationship is a relevant variable and whether the incidence of a particular attachment style differs with regard to the type of close relationship. The aim of our study was to assess the stability of attachment styles across students' romantic relationships, friendships and family relations.

The sample consisted of 210 male and female undergraduate students of the University of Zagreb. The Experiences in Close Relationship Inventory developed by Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) was administered to the participants. In order to assess the level of attachment toward other objects (friends and family members), the instrument was slightly modified. Data were analyzed and interpreted both according to their position on attachment dimensions and the type of attachment they indicate.

The results show that people form a more secure attachment in their relations with members of their families and friends than with their romantic partners. We investigated whether there is a correspondence between attachment styles in different types of close relationships. The only style that appears relatively stable is secure attachment. The non-secure attachment styles with romantic partners are highly compensated for with the secure one in other, less threatening relationships, with friends or family members. The results are discussed in relation to the age of participants and the characteristics of students' life-style.

Key words: adult attachment, various types of close relationships, attachment style

The term attachment is usually used to refer to the relationship between a mother and a child. That is, indeed, the basic example of attachment if the mother is the one who takes care of the child. But, a child can also be attached to the father, grandmother, grandfather, and later to friends, a partner and other people with whom the child may be in a long emotional relationship, regardless of its quality. Bowlby (1969) defines attachment as an affective relationship characterized by a tendency to demand and retain closeness with certain persons, especially when an individual is under stress.

Attachment is formed in infancy between a child and a person or persons taking care of the child, which, in most cases, is the mother. Depending on the mother's behavior towards the newborn, the quality of their relationship, the

mother's noticing of the child's signals and their correct interpretation, adequate responding, care and gentleness, three types of the child's attachment to the mother are formed: secure attachment, avoidant attachment, or anxious-ambivalent attachment (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). If the mother notices the child's signals, interprets them correctly and responds adequately, with care and gentleness, her child will develop the secure attachment style. On the other hand, if the mother is cold and does not respond to the child's needs, the child will develop the avoidant attachment style. Finally, the mother who sometimes responds to her child's needs with warmth and care, and sometimes coldly ignores them, will probably have a child with the anxious-ambivalent attachment style.

Although the attachment theory emerged as an explanation of the emotional relationship between a child and a caregiver, Bowlby (1969) thinks that the same attachment style system exists and functions throughout the individual's lifetime. Attached behavior becomes organized within one's self as an internal working model that defines emotional relationships during one's life. Namely, a child develops an internal working model based on the mother's ade-

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quate responding to the child's needs. This internal working models shape child's expectations of other people, as well as of self. Knowing how often our expectations define our perception, cognition and behavior (e.g. self-fulfilling prophecy), it is not surprising that internal working models developed in childhood can be resistant to change and can have long-term continuity in shaping our world. Based on the attachment theory, it can be concluded that the type of attachment once adopted in childhood works and structures the quality of relationships in adolescence and adult life. Whereas in childhood parents are usually the main objects of attachment, during adolescence the hierarchy of the objects of attachment changes - young people become more oriented towards their peers. Although parents do not cease to be objects of attachment at that age nor later in life, it is believed that they are slowly becoming "objects of attachment in reserve".

Any relationship in the adult phase is a potential source of attachment. Romantic relationships will probably be the primary source of attachment, but even a relationship with close friends can be characterized as attachment. Weiss (1982) offered the criteria for attachment in the adult phase:

- a. the wish for closeness with the object of attachment, especially when the individual is under stress,
- b. the feeling of safety resulting from contact with the object of attachment,
- c. the uneasiness or protest when the individual faces loss or separation from the object of attachment.

The theory of attachment offers a promising theoretical framework for understanding friendship, marriage, romantic and other human relationships. Based on these ideas, several authors continued in the 1980's research in the field of adult attachment. Hazan and Shaver (1987), pioneers in the field, claimed that the same three types of attachment existing in childhood can be seen in adults. Trust in people, as well

Secure attachment	I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.
Avoidant attachment	I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.
Anxious/ambivalent attachment	I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.

Figure 1. Attachment measure in adulthood according to Hazan and Shaver (1987)

as easiness with which they make close contacts with others are typical of *securely attached* individuals. Individuals with the *anxious/ambivalent attachment* style have an intensive need for emotional closeness with other people but they are afraid that they are not loved enough. The *avoidant attachment* individuals do not trust people and avoid being close to anyone (see Figure 1).

Bartholomew (1990), however, thinks that avoidant attachment could be the result of two different motives and, therefore, distinguishes two different forms of this attachment style. One is motivated by the defense mechanism of self-sufficiency and is called *dismissive attachment*, while the other is motivated by the fear of anticipated refusal from other individuals and it is called *fearful attachment*. Unlike Hazan and Shaver, whose starting point was Ainsworth's theory, Bartholomew starts from the Bowlby's theory framework, in which individuals internalize their experiences with caregivers, resulting in two notions which serve as the so-called *working models*: self model and model of others. These two dimensions provide the basis from which four attachment styles spring, depending on whether the individual has a positive or a negative model of oneself or others (see Figure 2).

Individuals with a positive model of self and a positive model of others, will develop the secure attachment style, which means that they will feel at ease both with intimacy as well as with autonomy. On the other hand, individuals with a positive model of self, but a negative model of others will develop the dismissive attachment style, which means that they refuse being intimate with other people and tend to be totally independent. In contrast, individuals who have a positive model of other people but a negative model of themselves have the preoccupied attachment style; they are very anxious about their relationships and afraid of being abandoned. Finally, individuals with both a negative model of self and a negative model of others have the fearful attachment style, which means that they fear intimacy and tend to avoid other people.

In their study published in 1987 Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver first tried to capture types of attachment in adult romantic relationships. Hazan and Shaver described the ways in which adults belonging to each of the three categories of attachment would behave in their romantic relationships, and the participants were to choose the description which described them best (see Figure 1).

		Self model	
		Positive	Negative
Other model	Positive	Secure attachment	Preoccupied attachment
	Negative	Dismissive attachment	Fearful attachment

Figure 2. Two-dimensional model of attachment styles in adulthood (Bartholomew, 1990)

At least two important developments in measuring adult attachment followed: (1) several authors formed items based on descriptions of different attachment types and added level of agreement scale, analyzed factors and turned them into continuous scales; (2) Kim Bartholomew (1990) suggested the four types of adult attachment concept. She also developed the nominal (RQ) and continuous scale (RSQ) of the four attachment types, and of the two conceptual dimensions underlying those four types (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998).

Alongside the development of these two measures, other researchers continued to develop their own instruments. Some tried to capture the two described dimensions while others tried to return to the original thesis of Bowlby and Ainsworth. In 1998, Brennan, Clark, and Shaver published their scale, based on the unique factor analysis of all the known self-evaluation attachment scales applied to many adult respondents. The instrument is composed by combining items of 60 subscales that deal with adult attachment. Brennan found 12 specific constructive factors. Their factorization resulted in 2 second-order factors, which were clearly identified as "anxiety" and "avoidance".

Anxiety refers to the fear of rejection or abandonment whereas *avoidance* reflects the experience of discomfort caused by closeness and addiction to others. Out of a group of 323 items, the authors sorted out 18 items for each subscale, taking the items that had the highest correlation with the factors of the higher rank. According to Brennan et al. (1998), the Experience in Close Relationships Inventory is a self-evaluative scale of 36 items aimed at measuring the respondents' score on each dimension, as well as the respondents' attachment style based on the combination of results obtained on both dimensions.

Although the instrument provided by Brennan et al. (1998) is still considered one of the best attachment measures for adults (Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999), the authors suggest that continuous efforts be made in developing and improving attachment measures. One of the steps made in that direction was made by Fraley, Waller and Brennan (2000), who developed Experience in Close Relationships Inventory - Revised, a 36 item scale, possible to use online.

Research done so far on adult attachment focused mainly on the relationship with partners (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Shaver & Fraley, 1997; Fraley & Waller, 1998). However, attachment theory predicts that attachment style once formed in childhood defines the structure and quality of later relationships to significant others, which means not only partners, but also friends and family members. Therefore, in order to understand and explain adult relationships, it is of extreme importance to change the focus of research and redirect attention to other types of adult close relations.

The aim of our study was to assess the stability of attachment styles across students' romantic relationships, friend-

ships and family relations. First, we were interested in finding out whether the type of relationship is a relevant variable and whether the incidence of a particular attachment style differs with regard to the type of close relationship. According to Bowlby's predictions, this should not be the case; an individual should form the same attachment style in all his or her relations with significant others.

Therefore, the main goal of this study was to investigate whether there is a correspondence between attachment styles in different types of close relationships (with partners, friends, and with family members). Strong correlations would support the idea of attachment type consistency in various forms of close relationships. If this is not the case, if correlations are low, we would particularly be interested in finding out whether individuals compensate for inadequate relationships with partners by having more adequate relationships with their friends or family members.

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 210 male and female undergraduate students of psychology and Police College from the University of Zagreb. Average age of participants was 21 years.

Instruments and procedure

The Experiences in Close Relationship Inventory developed by Brennan et al. (1998) was administered. This measure categorizes participants into four categories depending on their attachment style as defined by Bartholomew. The categorization can be made according to the respondent's scores on two dimensions: anxiety and avoidance. There are 18 items for each dimension, correlated strongly with the underlying factor. Two subscales, as well as factors they are based on, do not correlate significantly ($r = .12$, ns). Obtained Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficients are .94 for Avoidance, and .91 for Anxiety subscale.

The participants were asked to assess how they generally feel in their relationships with romantic partners. In order to assess the level of attachment toward other objects (friends and family members), the instrument was slightly modified. The instructions for each version as well as objects of attachment in each item were changed accordingly. We also changed the order of items in the two new versions of the inventory.

The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and their informed consent was obtained before the assessment. It was made clear to all the participants that they are free to withdraw from the study in any moment without

negative consequences. None of the students refused to participate. The questionnaires were administered simultaneously and anonymously. Each participant answered all three questionnaires in random order. Although we were anxious about reactions and possible boredom due to a large number of similar questions, our participants did not object to answering all the items, and the whole procedure lasted about 20 minutes.

RESULTS

Data were analyzed and interpreted both according to their position on attachment dimensions and the type of attachment that they indicate. Before answering the research problems, we will present the main descriptive findings. We find them interesting because this is to our knowledge the first time that the quality of attachment that the same person forms in various types of close relationships was assessed and compared.

As we can see in Table 1, our participants showed a moderate level of anxiety and a slightly lower level of avoidance in their relationships. We compared the levels of the same dimension across different relations, and the results of the analysis of variance showed significant differences in the anxiety dimension ($F(2,370) = 71.901; p < .001$). For these data there is a significant linear trend ($F(1,185) = 123.231; p < .001$). The students reported the highest level of anxiety in their romantic relationships, somewhat lower in relations with their friends, and the lowest level in relations to the members of their families. Analysis of variance also yielded a significant effect of the type of relationship regarding the level of avoidance ($F(2,372) = 5.214; p < .01$). For these data a significant linear trend was found ($F(1,186) = 10.756; p < .001$). The students reported the highest level of avoidance in relations to their family members, somewhat lower in relations to their romantic partners, and the lowest level in relations to friends. If we compare levels of anxiety and of avoidance across different types of relationships, result show that students display significantly higher level of anxiety than avoidance in romantic relations ($t(195) = 7.26; p < .001$) and friendships ($t(185) = 6.79; p < .001$), while they are equally high on both of these dimensions in family relations ($t(189) = -1.46; p > .05$; see Figure 3).

Table 1

Means and standard deviations of results on anxiety and avoidance dimensions across three types of close relationships ($N = 210$)

	Anxiety		Avoidance	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Partners	66.30	17.699	52.59	18.610
Friends	60.86	15.729	49.63	15.985
Family members	53.05	14.098	55.35	18.918

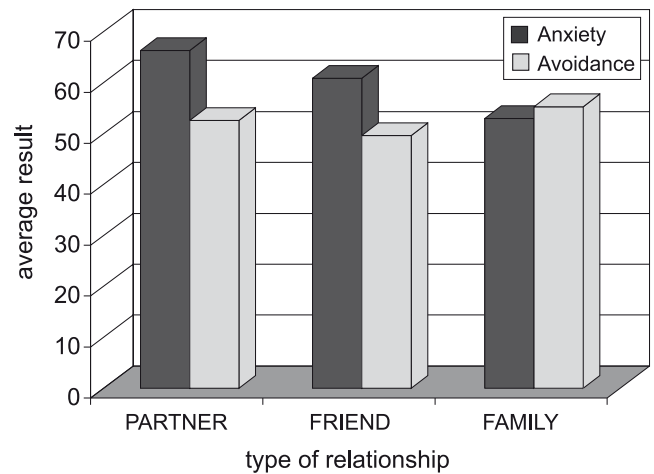


Figure 3. The level of anxiety and avoidance in attachment across different close relationships (with romantic partners, friends and family members)

Despite the widespread gender stereotype of women showing higher levels of neuroticism and anxiety (Schumaker, Barraclough, & Vagg, 1988; Warren, 1982; Twenge, 2000), no gender differences were found in the anxiety dimension of attachment. Students of both sexes reported the highest levels of anxiety in romantic relations, lower ones in friendships, and the lowest levels in family relations. There were, however, some significant gender differences in the levels of avoidance. All students reported the same levels of avoidance in romantic relations, but the male students showed significantly more avoidance in their relations with friends ($t(186) = 4.69; p < .01$) and family ($t(193) = 2.20; p < .05$) compared to the female students (see Figure 4).

Having in mind that avoidance reflects experience of discomfort caused by closeness and addiction to others, these gender differences could be the result of a need for higher autonomy and independence in our male participants, which is a well known and widely documented gender difference (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000; Cross & Madson, 1997; Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Davidson & Duberman, 1982). The young age of our participants and their limited experience with romantic partners could be the reason why gender differences were not found in attachment in romantic relationships, where women reported higher levels of avoidance than in the other two types of relations.

In order to assess the stability of attachment dimensions across different types of close relationships, Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed between the reported levels of anxiety for each relation, as well as between the reported levels of avoidance. As we can see in Table 2, our results suggest that there is a significant and relatively respectable stability in avoidance (r range from .50 to .62), but a very low stability in anxiety (r range from .25 to .30).

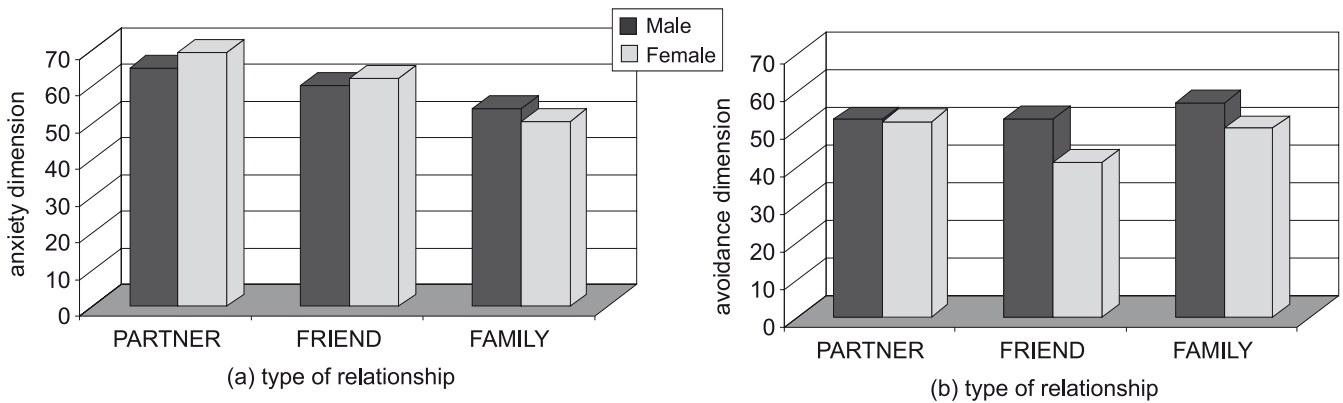


Figure 4a and 4b. Gender differences in the level of anxiety and avoidance in attachment across different close relationships (with romantic partners, friends and family members)

Table 2

Correlation coefficients between levels of anxiety and avoidance in attachment across different close relationships (with romantic partners, friends and family members)

	Partner	Friend	Family
Partner	-	.616**a	.502**a
Friend	.306**b	-	.543**a
Family	.257**b	.273**b	-

Note. a = correlation coefficients for anxiety dimension; b = correlation coefficients for avoidance dimension.

**p < .01.

Our analysis so far indicates that there is less stability in adult attachment across different types of close relationships than one would predict according to attachment theory, which suggests that the attachment style developed during our early years will reflect itself as some kind of inner working model on all our close relations in adulthood. However, one's result on a single attachment dimension does not equate one's attachment style, and a lower stability of avoidance dimension level does not necessarily mean that there is a low stability in the attachment style. Therefore, we continued with the data analysis in terms of the four different attachment styles formulated by Bartholomew (1990).

Data analysis in terms of four different attachment styles

According to Brennan et al. (1998), we divided our participants into four categories, each representing one of four attachment styles: secure, preoccupied, dismissive and fearful. Participants were classified into one of four groups according the procedure suggested by Brennan et al (1998). The same procedure was performed for all three types of close relationships, and the results of these categorizations are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Number and percentage of participants showing each of four different attachment styles in various close relationships (with romantic partners, friends and family members)

	Secure	Preoccupied	Dismissive	Fearful
Partner	96 (49%)	65 (33%)	23 (12%)	12 (6%)
Friend	130 (66%)	38 (19%)	14 (7%)	4 (2%)
Family	133 (68%)	16 (8%)	35 (18%)	6 (3%)

As we can see in the first row in Table 3, the incidence of each attachment style in romantic relationships is consistent with some other research findings (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). About half of our students have the secure attachment style, one third is preoccupied with their romantic relations, 12% are dismissive, and only 6% fearful.

We were, however, more interested in the results concerning relationships with friends and family, the area that research has not been focused on so far. These results are shown in the second and third rows in Table 3. It is obvious that there are more students (around two thirds of them) who have the secure attachment style in their relations with friends and family members, and fewer students that have inadequate attachment styles in those two types of close relationships compared to romantic relations. The only exception is the dismissive style, which is significantly more present in relations with family members (18%), even more than with romantic partners (12%) and friends (7%), which could be the reflection of the participants' age and their striving for autonomy and separation from parental influence.

These results indicate that people form a more secure attachment in their relations with members of their families and friends than with their romantic partners. This finding, however, is not surprising if we have in mind that one can usually rely on family and friends and perceive them rela-

tively stable compared to romantic partners. The results we obtained on the attachment dimensions confirm this interpretation, because the participants reported the highest levels of anxiety in romantic relationships, significantly lower ones in relations with friends, and the lowest ones with family members. But the question is whether these were the same participants that have the secure attachment style in all three types of close relationships, or different participants. In order to answer this question, we performed various data analyses. First, contingency correlations between attachment styles in different types of relations were computed (see Table 4).

Contrary to our expectations, correlation coefficients are very low and only those for the secure and preoccupied attachment styles are statistically significant (correlations range from .23 to .31; $p < .01$). There is no correlation in the dismissive and fearful attachment styles between different types of close relations. Such results suggest that students who have these attachment styles in one type of close relationships may have some different style in other relations.

To find out whether this is the case, we computed the number of matches between different types of close relations for each attachment style (see Table 5). We found out that 66 (50%) out of 133 participants having the secure attachment style in any of close relationships, have the same attachment style in all relations. This percentage is significantly lower

Table 4

Correlation coefficients between attachment styles in different types of relations (with romantic partners, friends and family members)

SECURE ATTACHMENT			
	Partner	Friends	Family
Partner	1.00	.31**	.30**
Friends		1.00	.23**
Family			1.00
PREOCCUPIED ATTACHMENT			
	Partner	Friends	Family
Partner	1.00	.30**	.23**
Friends		1.00	.24**
Family			1.00
DISMISSIVE ATTACHMENT			
	Partner	Friends	Family
Partner	1.00	.09	.12
Friends		1.00	.03
Family			1.00
FEARFUL ATTACHMENT			
	Partner	Friends	Family
Partner	1.00	-.04	-.08
Friends		1.00	-.02
Family			1.00

** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Percentage of matches between different types of close relations for each attachment style

ATTACHMENT STYLE	Maximal number of subjects	Number of matches	% of matches
Secure	133	66	50
Preoccupied	65	6	9
Dismissive	35	1	3
Fearful	12	0	0

for the other attachment styles. Only 9% of participants who have the preoccupied attachment style in one of the relationships show this style in all close relationships, 3% of those who have the dismissive attachment style, and none of those with fearful attachment style.

These results confirmed our conclusions about the stability of attachment across different types of close relationships. The only style that appears relatively stable is secure attachment, while the other styles do not. The remaining question was: If the other attachment styles are not stable across various types of relations, are these inadequate attachment styles formed in one type of relationship compensated for with the secure attachment style in other close relationships? To answer this question, we divided the participants in four categories on the basis of their attachment style in romantic relationships and counted how many participants from each category had each of the four attachment styles in the other two types of relations. The results are shown in Table 6.

As we can see from the first row in Table 6, around 80% of the participants that have the secure attachment style in their romantic relationships, have the same attachment style

Table 6

Number of participants from each category of attachment in romantic relationships who have each of four attachment styles in other two types of relations (with friends and family members)

PARTNER	FRIEND				FAMILY			
	S	P	D	F	S	P	D	F
Secure (96)	76	7	7	1	78	0	14	0
Preoccupied (65)	34	23	3	1	37	11	10	4
Dismissive (23)	14	3	3	2	14	1	7	1
Fearful (12)	6	5	0	0	3	4	4	1

Note. S, P, D, F = secure, preoccupied, dismissive and fearful attachment style. Numbers in brackets represent number of participants with particular attachment style in romantic relationship (the sum of numbers for each type of relationship does not equal the numbers in brackets due to missing cases).

in both other types of close relations. We could say that this style is relatively stable. But the others are not. Our results show that most of the people who have other attachment styles with their romantic partners do not have the same attachment style with their friends or family members. Some of them do, but more than half of them (52-57% of preoccupied, 61% of dismissive, and 50% of fearful) have the secure attachment style in the other two types of close relations. Although there are too few participants with the fearful attachment style to claim this with certainty, the pattern is obvious.

DISCUSSION

In his original attachment theory, Bowlby (1969) assumed that the attachment style a child forms with his or her mother (or caregiver) continues to exist as the inner working model that affects his or her close relationships in adulthood. For more than twenty years psychologists and psychiatrists have studied adult attachment and compared it with the attachment in infancy. But most of the studies were concerned solely with attachments in romantic relationships (Brennan et al, 1998; Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Simpson, 1990), as if these were the only close relationships that adult people have and as if the romantic partners were the only ones that they form attachment with. This is a far cry from Bowlby's original idea!

Thus, if we follow Bowlby's predictions, we will expect to find the same type of attachment style in various types of close relations that a particular individual has in his or her life. If a certain attachment style functions as an inner working model of an individual, it has to be relatively stable during the lifetime and across different relations. In other words, a person who has developed the secure attachment style, for example, would show this style in almost every relationship she or he has, and there would be no danger that she or he will form any of the three remaining inadequate attachment styles. Unfortunately, the opposite is true as well, which means that there would be no chance for a person with the inadequate attachment style in one relationship to form the secure one in another.

However, research findings do not support this assumption completely, although they are somewhat consistent with it. Findings indicate that attachment styles are moderately stable throughout the first 20 years of life (Fraley, 1999; Baldwin & Fehr, 1995; Klohnen & Bera, 1998; Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1994). This is especially true for the secure attachment style, which in some studies proved to be the most stable (Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Crowell & Treboux, 1995).

In our study, we have found that the correlations between attachment styles of the same person in various relations are lower than expected. There were no correlations

in two styles (dismissive and fearful), and the other two correlations were barely significant. When the number of matches of the same attachment style in romantic relationships, friendships and family relations was computed, the results were astonishing. With the exception of the secure attachment style, in which 50% of matches were found, the other attachment styles proved to be highly unstable. In none of them the percentage of matches exceeded 10%. This means that there is more than a 90% chance that an individual who has the preoccupied, dismissive or fearful attachment style in one type of close relationships will have a different attachment style in other types of relation. In other words, these attachment styles are not at all stable. But, which style would the person form instead? Would it be a random choice, or is there some kind of pattern? Our results have shown that there is a pattern. The secure attachment style is the most frequent style. This is not surprising as research has so far shown that secure attachment is the most adaptive attachment style. Studies suggest that the secure attachment style in infancy is considered the most desirable style by mothers (van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999). Furthermore, individuals with this attachment style report being more satisfied with their relationships and the quality of their lives (Feeney, Peterson, & Noller, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994; Simpson, 1990; Senchak & Leonard, 1992). We have found that almost 80% of individuals who have the secure attachment style with their romantic partners maintain the same style in relations with their friends and family members. And more than 50% of individuals that have each of the other three inadequate attachment styles in romantic relationships have secure attachment with either friends or family. We would dare to say that inadequate attachment styles with romantic partners are highly compensated for with the secure one in other, less threatening relationships.

However, quite the opposite interpretation is also possible. We could say that two thirds of our participants have probably developed the secure attachment style in their infancy, and they still have it in relations with the members of their families and friends. These close relationships last long enough so far and they are used to them, so they could feel secure and comfortable in them. But having in mind that our participants are students who are 21 year old on average, their romantic relationships are probably still superficial and perceived as a way of having fun. They are at the age of experimenting, enjoying their freedom, or at the age of getting to know as many interesting people as they can and trying to find their soul-mates. Most of them are not ready for commitment yet. Studies have shown that with age closeness, support and mutual care become more salient as provisions from romantic relationships (Furman & Schaffer, 2003; Shulman & Scharf, 2000; Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 2001). Therefore the young age of our sample could be reflected in their answers about the attachment they have in their romantic relationships. It is also possible that, because

of these characteristics, the results show inadequate attachment styles with romantic partners for the individuals that mostly have the secure attachment style with their friends and family. In other words, our results could simply be the reflection of the age of our participants.

We rely on future research to show whether this is true or not. Right now we are in the process of collecting data on more mature participants (age 30-40), who could have more experience with romantic partners. Therefore, their attachment styles reported on applied measures could be based on more accurate appraisal of their typical behavior in those relationships. This will enable us to draw more general conclusions about adult attachment.

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