Adult attachment and psychosocial functioning
Pielage, Suzanne Brenda

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Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2006

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):
Attachment in the context of multiple relationships in adulthood

Abstract
The present study centered on the theoretical underpinnings of attachment theory in the context of multiple attachment relationships in adulthood. One hundred and seventy-eight individuals from the general community responded to four versions of the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) i.e. one addressing individuals’ relationships with others in general, one addressing their relationship with parents, one addressing their relationship with current romantic partner and one addressing their relationship with their current attachment figure, and to a series of questionnaires regarding recollections of parental care, satisfaction in the current romantic relationship, and the intrusiveness and unsupportiveness from the current attachment figure. Results indicated that there was high concordance of the attachment qualities in various relationships, but also high divergence in their association with different domains of psychosocial functioning (parenting, perceived relational satisfaction, intrusiveness and unsupportiveness). Hence, while broadly assessing the same underlying concept, the different versions of the RQ are associated with different areas of interpersonal functioning. This seems to imply that the selection of the particular RQ version presented to respondents requires careful consideration and documentation so as to facilitate interpretation and comparison of results across studies. While methodological limitations restrict their generalizability, the findings in this study convey the impression that the application of multiple RQ’s to assess attachment orientation in multiple relationships might be a fruitful avenue for further study.

Introduction
Attachment theory hinges on the proposition that people have a biologically based survival system that compels them to seek the proximity of an ‘attachment figure’ (i.e. someone deemed able to provide comfort, protection and support) when threatened, anxious or (emotionally) upset. According to Bowlby (1969), stressful situations activate the ‘attachment behavioural system’, that is emotions, cognitions, and behaviour aimed at gaining support from the attachment figure. An attachment figure promotes attachment behaviours (such as seeking support and proximity) by being available, responsive, and comforting when a threat or stressor presents itself.
Attachment theory suggests that the attachment system evolved in order to protect infants from danger and thus ensure the survival of the species. Although the survival function of the attachment need is most obvious for infants, attachment theory emphasizes the relevance of attachment needs across the lifespan (Ainsworth, 1991; Bowlby, 1973, 1988b).

Current theory and research on adult attachment draws heavily on Bowlby’s concept of attachment representations or working models. According to attachment theory, children construct ‘internal working models’ on the basis of their daily interactions with attachment figures. Depending on the nature of these repeated interactions, individuals come to see themselves as worthy or unworthy of love and support and others as dependable or undependable. These expectations about self and others then continue to guide behaviour in subsequent relationships, leading to the stability of attachment patterns in time and across individuals (Bowlby, 1973, 1980, 1988b; Bretherton, 1985; Bretherton & Munholland, 1999; Collins & Read, 1994; Main, 1991).

In line with this conceptualization attachment researchers have tended to define attachment as a stable trait that guides interpersonal functioning in different relationships throughout the life span; the so-called ‘attachment style’ (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978; Bartholomew, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Main, Kaplan & Cassidy, 1985). This conceptualization however is somewhat at odds with another proposition of attachment theory, i.e. that children may become attached to more than one care-giver and on the basis of (possibly different) experiences in these relationships may develop separate (and possibly different) internal models of these
relationships (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1988a; Bretherton, 1985; Howes, 1999; Kobak, 1994). The apparent incompatibility between these two conceptualizations, with on the one hand the assumption of stable attachment styles across relationships and their predictive power with regard to psychosocial development and, on the other hand, the assumption of attachment being the product of separate relational experiences, has placed attachment theorists for an array of unanswered questions (see for instance Bretherton, 1985; Cassidy, 1999; Kobak, 1994; Lewis, 1994; Rutter, 1995, 1999).

In this study we focus on the following dilemma: assuming that most individuals participate in various relationships and thus are involved with multiple attachment figures across the life-span (e.g. parents, friends, lovers) the question is raised as to whether early experience leaves us with a single, generalized model of attachment that contributes to the course of all later relationships or if (instead) there are specific working models associated with specific (types of) relationships (Owens, Crowell, Pan, Treboux, O’Connor, & Waters, 1995).

Several different possibilities for the organization of internal working models in the context of multiple attachments have been suggested in the developmental literature (Howes, 1999). Bretherton (1985) suggests an hierarchical organization in which the quality of a child's attachment to the most salient caregiver, most often the mother, is always the most influential. According to the hierarchical organization, maternal attachment security influences the security of all subsequent attachment relationships (i.e., the ‘prototype hypothesis’; Owens et al., 1995) and as a consequence attachment quality with mother is the strongest predictor of interpersonal functioning.

An alternative organizational structure, in which all attachment relationships are integrated into a single, generalized attachment model, has also been proposed (van IJzendoorn, Sagi & Lambermon, 1992). In this 'integrative' model all attachment relationships in the social environment are influential. Security of attachment in one relationship is expected to compensate insecurity of attachment in other relationships. Thus, interpersonal functioning can be best predicted by considering the quality of all attachment relationships in an individuals’ environment. However, it remains unclear how these multiple attachment relationships are integrated into a single attachment style.
In contrast, the independent model described by Suess, Grossmann and Sroufe (1992) considers each attachment as independent, both in its quality and in its influence on development. It is suggested that different attachment relationships are differentially influential for different developmental domains. For example, attachment quality with mother may influence general self-esteem whereas attachment to father may influence negative affect or tension in interpersonal conflict (Suess et al., 1992; Howes, 1999).

With regard to the organization of working models of attachment in adults, Collins and Read (1994) propose a framework that accounts for both stability and relationship specificity of adult attachment. Working models of attachment relationships are organized in an hierarchical network of interconnected models. At the top of the hierarchical network is a ‘default’ model that corresponds to the most general representations about others and the self. Further down the hierarchy are more general models of particular relationships (parents, friends, lovers). Lowest in the hierarchy are the most specific models corresponding to particular partners and particular relationships. Early developed models (e.g. of parents or oneself) will affect the models that evolve at a later time in life (e.g. peers, lovers), thereby contributing to the assumed stability or trait-like nature of attachment orientation. However, the hierarchical network approach allows relationship specificity as well, as some working models are more strongly related than others and activation of one particular working model need not automatically activate other models. In this context, Collins and Read (1994) suggest that the term ‘attachment style’ should be reserved for those working models that apply to a broad range of situations (self in relationships with others). Models regarding specific relationships (e.g. self in relationship with current romantic partner) should be referred to with the term ‘attachment quality’. However, no predictions are made on how the different attachment qualities influence interpersonal functioning.

The extent to which the quality of attachment to different individuals in the social environment is similar is empirically addressed in studies on the concordance of attachment orientation in different attachment relationships. Studies examining concordance rates in children yield inconsistent results. Some studies found attachment quality to be independent across caregivers (Belsky & Rovine, 1987;
Grossmann, Grossmann, Huber & Wartner, 1981; Main & Weston, 1981), whereas others reveal similarity of attachment quality across caregivers (Goossens & van IJzendoorn, 1990; Steele, Steele, & Fonagy, 1996). In their meta-analysis van IJzendoorn & DeWolff (1997) report a standardised effect size of only .17 for the concordance of child-mother and child-father attachment orientation, indicating that it is not uncommon for infants to be securely attached to one parent but insecurely to the other parent. Hence, infants can, and often do, construct different working models for different relationships (Bowlby, 1988a; Ducharme, Doyle, Markiewicz, 2002; Fox, Kimmerly, Schafer, 1991; Kobak, 1994).

In spite of these findings in the developmental literature, research on the concordance of the quality of attachment to various individuals in the social environment of adults is sparse. Most adult attachment researchers have tended to continue to conceptualize attachment as a stable trait rather than a relationship specific construct. Individuals are usually classified into three or four ‘attachment styles’ without regard for specific situations or persons. As a consequence, adult attachment researchers have tended to ignore the possibility that internal models of attachment may be specific to particular relationships. Moreover, the many methods to assess adult attachment (interviews and self-reports) tend to measure attachment orientation in one particular domain (child-parent relationships or romantic relationships) instead of measuring attachment orientation in several domains (see Furman & Simon, 2004; Furman, Simon, Shaffer & Bouchey, 2002 and Gerlsma & Luteijn, 2000 for exceptions).

In their review on the measurement of individual differences of attachment in adults, Crowell, Fraley and Shaver (1999) present a multi-trait, multi-method matrix of studies that investigated the concordance between quality of attachment to various individuals in the social environment. If the same method (interview or self-report) is used, the average relationship between attachment qualities is moderate ($r = .31$). However, if different methods are used to tap different attachment qualities the relationship drops to .15. Interestingly, all studies in the review compare only two attachment relationships, most often parents with romantic partners, instead of focussing on various attachment relationships in the social environment. Furthermore,
it remains unclear which individual in the social environment is considered to be the primary attachment figure.

Another question concerning multiple attachment relationships relates to the issue of how these different attachment qualities influence interpersonal functioning. Quality of attachment to the most principal attachment figure could be the most influential: for example, if the current attachment figure is the partner than he/she will have the most influence on interpersonal functioning. On the other hand, it could be that one attachment is most influential in some areas and another is most influential in other areas (for example quality of attachment to partner has influence on interpersonal competence whereas quality of attachment to mother influences self-esteem). Researchers have made little progress in answering these questions.

Overview of the present studies
Using the hierarchical network model of attachment relationships (Collins & Read, 1994) as our frame of reference, we address several issues related to the problem of multiple attachment relationships in adulthood. The aims were two-fold: To examine the level of concordance between global attachment style and different attachment qualities, and secondly, to obtain information about the domains in which each of the attachment qualities would be the most influential.

Method

Subjects and Procedure
The data for this study was provided by 178 adult volunteers (85 men, 93 women; mean age 35.19 years, SD = 15.40), recruited among train passengers ‘en route’ in The Netherlands. Only individuals who were currently involved in a romantic relationship with a minimum duration of three months were included (mean duration of the romantic relationship was 10.62 years (range 4 months to 54 years; SD = 12.75 years). Mean level of education was relatively high (M = 4.48; SD = 0.88) on a continuum that ranged from 1 (primary school only) to 5 (completed university education).

In order to collect the data, a total of eight research assistants took the train from Groningen to Amsterdam, each randomly selecting a train compartment in which they asked every adult individual to participate in a research study on ‘autobiographical
memories and close relationships’. Those who agreed to participate filled in and returned questionnaire booklets with the measures described below.

**Measures**
To establish which individual in the social environment was considered to be the current attachment figure, subjects responded to the following question “Who is your current attachment figure, i.e. the person you would most likely seek out for comfort when you’re emotionally upset or distressed?” Answer categories were: best friend/ mother/ father/ brother/ sister/ partner/ other relatives/ other namely ....

The *Relationship Questionnaire* (RQ; Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991) was logically derived from Bowlby’s (1973; p. 238) description of working models of attachment as consisting of two complementary and mutually confirming components, i.e. the model of self: ‘whether or not the self is judged to be the sort of person towards whom anyone and the attachment figure in particular is likely to respond in a helpful way’ and the model of the attachment figure: ‘whether or not the attachment figure is judged to be the sort of person who in general responds to calls for support and protection’. Bartholomew (1990) translated these basic components into the dimensions ‘positivity of self’ (feelings of self-worth versus anxiety and uncertainty about one’s lovability) and ‘positivity of others’ (trust versus anxiety and uncertainty about the supportiveness of others). These dimensions define four quadrants as prototypic attachment orientations: Secure (positive model of self and others), Dismissing (positive model of self and negative model of others), Preoccupied (negative model of self and positive model of others), and Fearful (negative model of both self and others).

The RQ is generally used with the instruction to think of one’s experiences in close relationships, or to think of one’s experiences in relationships with ‘others’. With this instruction, the instrument most likely addresses what Collins and Read (1994) label ‘attachment style’, i.e. the default working model at the top of the hierarchical network that corresponds to the representations about self in relationships with others in general. As was proposed by Griffin and Bartholomew (1994), the RQ can, however, be reformulated to measure attachment in specific relationships, i.e. Collins and Read’s ‘attachment qualities’: ‘The measure can be worded either in terms of general orientations
to close relationships, orientations to romantic relationships or orientation to a specific relationship (with ‘others’ changed to a specific partner ‘P’)’ (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994, p.51).

The standard version of the RQ consists of four short paragraphs characterizing the four attachment styles. For example, the prototypical description of the Fearful attachment orientation reads as follows: ‘I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others’. Respondents are instructed to rate on 7-point scales (ranging from 1 - not at all like me to 7 - very much like me) the extent to which each prototypical description corresponds to their experiences in relationships.

In this study, to assess ‘global attachment style’, the standard version of the RQ was used, with the instruction to think of ‘others’. In order to assess ‘attachment quality’ in the relationship with current romantic partner, the RQ was reformulated and presented with the instruction to think of experiences in the relationship with partner. For example, the reformulation of the prototypical description intended to assess fearful attachment to current partner reads as follows: ‘I am uncomfortable getting close to my partner. I want an emotionally close relationship with my partner, but I find it difficult to trust my partner completely, or to depend on my partner. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to my partner’.

Similarly, the reformulation of the RQ to measure attachment quality to current attachment figure reads as follows: ‘I am uncomfortable getting close to my attachment figure. I want an emotionally close relationship with my attachment figure, but I find it difficult to trust my attachment figure completely, or to depend on my attachment figure. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to my attachment figure’.

In order to assess ‘attachment quality’ in the relationship with parents we reformulated and presented the RQ with the instruction to think of (past) experiences in the relationship with parents: ‘I am uncomfortable getting close to my parents. I want an emotionally close relationship with my parents, but I find it difficult to trust my parents completely, or to depend on my parents. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to my parents’.

It should be noted that some participants did not complete this RQ parents version because their parents had died. For this reason, N varies slightly in the
analyses reported below. In this study, we chose to assess the quality of the relationship with parents rather than with father and mother separately, both in order to limit the number of retests presented to the participants and in order to allow comparison of our findings with similar studies in the literature (e.g. Crowell et al., 1999).

Recollections of parenting were measured with the *Parental Bonding Instrument* (PBI; Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979), a 25-item self-report questionnaire measuring the factors care and overprotection. Items are scored on a four-point scale (ranging from 0 - untrue to 3 - true) and are separately answered for both mother and father. According to the authors, parental rearing behaviour that is characterized by a lack of care and an excess of overprotection particularly compromises the development of a secure bond between parent and child, because lack of care deprives the child of a secure base to turn to when in distress, whereas excess of control and overprotection hampers the child’s autonomous behaviour. To examine the relationship between the four RQ’s and the PBI, sumscores for parental care (maternal + paternal Care) and parental overprotection (maternal + paternal Overprotection) were calculated (correlations between maternal and paternal scalescores were >.73). Reliability in terms of Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for internal consistency was $\alpha = .91$ for parental overprotection and $\alpha = .94$ for parental care.

Satisfaction with the current romantic relationship was measured with the *Relational Interaction Satisfaction Scale* (RISS; Buunk, 1990). The RISS consists of 8 items with Likert-type answering format ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). In this study one item ‘I regret being married to my partner’ was omitted, as a fair percentage of respondents was not married. Internal consistency was $\alpha = .84$ for the scale in this sample.

The *Level of Expressed Emotion* scale (LEE; Cole & Kazarian, 1988) was used to measure the extent to which respondents perceive their current attachment figure as intrusive and unsupportive. The Dutch version of the LEE (Gerlsma & Hale, 1999; Gerlsma, van der Lubbe & van Nieuwenhuizen, 1992) consists of 38 items which are scored on a 4-point scale. This Dutch version of the LEE has 4 subscales: (1) lack of emotional support (2) intrusiveness/control (3) irritability and (4) criticism. In this
study we used the two subscales that are most directly related to attachment 
thoretical principles: perceived lack of emotional support from the attachment figure 
would deprive the individual of a secure base, whereas intrusiveness compromises 
autonomy. The attachment figure was defined as ‘the person you would be most likely 
to seek out for comfort in times of distress’. Cronbach’s alpha’s for the subscales lack 
of emotional support and intrusiveness were .85 and .87 respectively.

Results

Preliminary Analyses
Prior to conducting the analyses, a check was performed in order to establish the 
influence of gender on attachment styles, parental care and overprotection, 
relationship satisfaction, and perceived lack of supportiveness and intrusiveness from 
the attachment figure. A MANOVA with gender as the independent and the four 
amachment styles, parental care and overprotection, relationship satisfaction, perceived 
lack of support and intrusiveness from the attachment figure as dependent variables 
proved nonsignificant \[F(20,152) = 1.07; p = .39.\] Therefore gender was dropped 
from further analyses.

As a second preliminary analysis, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed 
amongst all dependent measures in the study. Table 3.1 summarizes the correlations 
between parental rearing style (care and overprotection), current relationship 
satisfaction and perceived lack of support and intrusiveness from the attachment 
figure.

Parental care was negatively related to parental overprotection (\(r = -.58, p<.01\)). 
Satisfaction with the current romantic relationship was negatively related to parental 
overprotection (\(r = -.20; p<.01\) but was not related to parental care (\(r = .07; n.s.\)). 
Furthermore perceived lack of emotional support from the attachment figure was 
negatively related to current relationship satisfaction (\(r = -.37; p<.01\)). This may well 
be due to the fact that 43% of the subjects identified their partner as their current 
attachment figure.
Table 3.1: Correlations between parental care, parental overprotection, satisfaction with the current romantic relationship and perceived lack of emotional support and intrusiveness from the attachment figure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Parental Care</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Parental Overprotection</td>
<td>-.58**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Current relationship satisfaction</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.20**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Perceived lack of emotional support</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.37**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Perceived intrusiveness</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .01

Current Attachment Figure

Table 3.2 shows which persons in the social environment were identified as the current attachment figure. The current attachment figure was defined as the person you would be most likely to seek out when emotionally upset or distressed. No sex-differences were found, so the data for men and women were compiled. Seventy-three individuals (43%) identified their partner as their primary current attachment figure. Fifty-one (30%) considered their best friend to be their attachment figure, 8 (5%) named their brother or sister, 5 (3%) their parents and 4 (2%) mentioned other relatives (grandmother, aunt) as attachment figure. The remaining 30 individuals (17%) indicated that they considered more than one individual as their attachment figures (i.e. partner and best friend), or named another attachment figure (i.e. priest, colleague).

Table 3.2: Frequencies and Percentages of persons identified as current attachment figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best friend</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother/sister</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relatives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Other’</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Concordance of quality of attachment in various relationships
To test the concordance between the attachment qualities in various specific relationships (parents, partner and attachment figure) and global attachment style, we calculated the homogeneity (mean-inter item correlation) for each of the attachment qualities. By treating the different attachment qualities as items on a hypothetical scale we were able to assess the extent to which the attachment qualities share a common core. Briggs and Cheek (1986) consider the optimal level of homogeneity to occur when the mean inter-item correlation is in the .2 to .4 range. If the homogeneity coefficient is lower than .1 it is unlikely that the attachment qualities address the same concept. However, a homogeneity coefficient greater than .5 would suggest that measuring attachment qualities for different individuals in the social environment is redundant, as the attachment qualities in fact address the same underlying concept (Briggs & Cheek, 1986). Hence, the lower the homogeneity coefficient, the greater the need for attachment researchers to carefully select a particular version of the RQ, dependent on the interpersonal domain addressed in their study.

Furthermore, Pearson correlations between pairs of attachment indices were computed to explore the interrelationships between the ‘global attachment style’ and attachment qualities of parents, partner, current attachment figure. In view of the hierarchical network approach (Collins & Read, 1994) we expected all attachment qualities to be related to the global attachment style as well as to each other.

Table 3.3 shows that homogeneity coefficients ranged between .40 and .56, indicating that the various attachment qualities were strongly related and generally addressed the same concept. The correlational pattern corroborates these findings: all the attachment qualities were significantly related to each other and to the global attachment style as well. The only association that did not reach significance was the relationship between attachment quality towards parents and partner for the fearful attachment orientation.
**Table 3.3: Interrelationships between different attachment qualities: Homogeneity (mean-inter-item correlations) and pairwise (Pearson PM) correlations for global attachment style, attachment quality towards parents, partner and current attachment figure.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean interitem r</th>
<th>'global attachment style' parents</th>
<th>'global attachment style' partner</th>
<th>'global attachment style' attachment figure</th>
<th>parents</th>
<th>partner</th>
<th>attachment figure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ- Secure</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.47**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ- Dismissing</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.51**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.50**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ- Preoccupied</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.51**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ- Fearful</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.56**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05; ** p < .01

**Relationship with interpersonal functioning**

To indicate in what way attachment qualities in various relationships are related to interpersonal functioning, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated for each of the attachment indices with parental care and overprotection, current relationship satisfaction and intrusiveness and perceived lack of emotional support from the attachment figure (see Table 3.4). In general, correlations tended to be significant within domains, i.e. relationship satisfaction was related to attachment quality with partner but was only weakly related to attachment quality with parents and global attachment style.

When considering the correlations that were found between domains it is important to note the following. First of all, the global version of the RQ, addressing global attachment style in relation to self and others, was hardly related to any of the proposed correlates of attachment in this study.

Recollections of parental care were related to the attachment quality in various specific relationships, i.e. those with parents, current partner and current primary attachment figure. Except for the dismissing prototype, all correlations were significant (p<.05), indicating that security in various attachment relationships was related to recollections of higher parental care, whereas preoccupation and fearfulness in various relationships were related to recollections of low parental care.
Intrusiveness and lack of support of the current attachment figure was predominantly related to preoccupation and fearfulness in various attachment relationships.

Lastly, current relationship satisfaction was related to all attachment orientations (i.e. secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and fearful), but only for quality of attachment in the relationships with current partner and current attachment figure (which, in 43% of the participants, involved the same relationship).

Table 3.4: Correlations between the attachment qualities, parental rearing styles, perceived lack of emotional support and intrusiveness from the attachment figure and current relationship satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parental Care</th>
<th>Parental Overprotection</th>
<th>Relationship satisfaction</th>
<th>Perceived lack of emotional support</th>
<th>Intrusiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ- Global</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissing</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preoccupied</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearful</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ- Parents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>-.48**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissing</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preoccupied</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearful</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ- Partner</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissing</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preoccupied</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearful</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>-.42*</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ- Attachment Figure</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>-.39**</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissing</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preoccupied</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.33**</td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearful</td>
<td>-.32**</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB Coefficients in bold transcript refer to correlations between two measures within a similar domain; *p < .05; **p < .01
**Discussion**

During the past decade, several attachment researchers have expressed their concern about the conceptualization of ‘attachment style’ as an individual difference variable as it seems that individuals may report different attachment orientations in different relationships (i.e. attachment qualities; Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns, Koh-Rangajaroo, 1996; Kobak, 1994; Lewis, 1994). In this context, it may be useful to measure attachment orientation in various relationships in order to obtain a more complete picture of the diversity of attachment experiences within individuals.

Participants in this study responded to four different versions of the RQ, one with the instruction to think of others in general (addressing an individual’s ‘global attachment style’), one with the instruction to think of one’s experiences with parents (addressing ‘attachment quality’ in the relationship with parents), one with the instruction to think of one’s experiences in the current romantic relationship with their partner (addressing ‘attachment quality’ in the relationship with current partner) and one with the instruction to think of one’s experiences with their attachment figure (addressing ‘attachment quality’ in the relationship with the current attachment figure). The aims were two-fold: To examine the level of concordance between RQ measures of attachment style and of different attachment qualities, and secondly, to obtain information about domains in which each of the attachment qualities would be the most influential.

The results indicated that the RQ’s measuring ‘attachment style’ and ‘attachment qualities’ were strongly related. Homogeneity coefficients were large enough to suggest that all four measures address the same underlying construct. In fact, they were almost large enough to meet Briggs and Cheeks (1986) criterion for item-redundancy. The correlational pattern corroborates these findings: the attachment qualities were generally highly concordant with each other and with the global attachment style as well. It should be noted, however, that part of this relatively high concordance might be due to shared method variance (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Crowell et al., 1999).

Furthermore, as would be expected on the basis of classical attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988), the various versions of the RQ show a link with recollections of parental rearing behaviour. Security of attachment in various specific relationships is
related to recollections of high parental care whereas preoccupation and fearfulness in attachment relationships is related to recollections of low parental care. In contrast, only those versions of the RQ that address attachment quality in current relationships (with partner and current attachment figure) are associated with current relationship functioning.

The findings described above are largely in line with the hierarchical network model of attachment relationships, which predicts some overlap but also considerable independence between attachment qualities and attachment style (Collins & Read, 1994). Attachment models developed by early experiences might influence the construction of subsequent models; on the other hand, new relationship-specific models might lead to the updating and refinement of the more general models. Thus, according to the hierarchical network model of attachment relationships there is a continued interplay between ‘old’ and ‘new’ models of attachment (which incidentally may account for some of the instability in adult attachment sometimes found in attachment research) (Baldwin & Fehr, 1995).

Although the RQ does not directly measure the content of a working model and the analyses presented here do not provide conclusive evidence of a hierarchical network of attachment relationships, the correlational pattern is in line with the hierarchical network model of attachment relationships. There is high concordance between the attachment qualities and also high divergence: While assessing broadly the same underlying construct, the different versions of the RQ are associated with different areas of interpersonal functioning. The implication of this finding seems clear: the various versions of the RQ are not identical and, although it is sometimes assumed otherwise (Brennan, Clark & Shaver, 1998, p. 73), the different versions of the RQ cannot be readily substituted for one another. The outcomes of this study suggest that that the instructions given to respondents before answering the RQ (i.e. instruction to think of ‘others in general’ or instruction to think of one’s ‘current relationship partner’ influences the obtained results, as each attachment style or quality seems to have specific areas to which they are associated. This seems to imply that the choice of the particular instruction presented to the respondents requires careful consideration and documentation in order to facilitate the interpretation and comparison of results across studies (see also Crowell et al, 1999).
Another issue which was highlighted by the present study is the fact that many different individuals in the social environment were considered to be attachment figures. Even though all respondents were involved in a close, intimate relationship, less than half of the subjects chose their spouse as their primary attachment figure. Many considered their best friend, parents or siblings to be their current attachment figure. As was outlined in the introduction, attachment as conceptualized by Bowlby, does not necessarily apply to all social bonds (Bretherton, 1985). Attachment theory is quite clear about the role and function of an attachment figure. An attachment figure is the person who is approached when an individual feels tired, sick, anxious or emotionally upset. Adhering more closely to this theoretical principle of attachment theory may have important consequences for the measurement of adult attachment, as researchers will need to become more precise in specifying which relationships in adulthood should be considered attachment relationships.

There are several limitations to this study. First of all, we used a convenience sample of train passengers involved in a romantic relationship. Individuals with predominantly insecure attachment experiences may have been underrepresented. As was described by Bowlby (1988), insecure individuals may avoid or be hampered in the establishment of a long-term close relationship. Moreover, the duration of the current romantic relationship was quite varied in this sample. The complexity and relationship specificity of the network organizing attachment experiences may well be a function of demographic variables such as age, level of education, relational history and duration of the current romantic relationship. Future studies with larger samples could explore this possibility and provide more information about individual differences in the complexity and relationship specificity of the network organization of attachment experiences (Baldwin et al., 1996; Collins & Read, 1994).

Second, the RQ's used in this study are self-reports that only measure the easily and directly accessible cognitions of the respondent and ignore attachment information that is difficult to access consciously (DeHaas, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Van IJzendoorn, 1994). Examination of the quality of attachment in various key relationships through in-depth interviews (Owens et al., 1995; Gerlsma & Luteijn, 2000) may help to clarify how other characteristics of attachment style and attachment
qualities, such as the coherence and accessibility of attachment representations, are related and organized (Main, 1991).

Furthermore, repeated measurement of the RQ within individuals might have caused response bias as a consequence of priming effects, that is letting individuals think about their relationships in general may have influenced the way individuals’ responded to subsequent RQ’s (Baldwin et al., 1996). As for the results of this study, such a priming effect could have either increased concordance between RQ versions; leading to an underestimation of the relationship specificity of the RQ’s but may have also decreased concordance between RQ versions due to a contrast effect as a result of which individuals may have exaggerated differences in responses to different partners. This is an empirical question worthy of investigation. Future studies might wish to use variation in the order of presentation of the RQ’s in order to examine these effects.

Finally, the correlational nature of the present study rules out any causal inferences: future studies, preferably with a longitudinal design, could explore to what extent insecure attachment style or qualities, as assessed by means of the RQ, are an antecedent, concomitant, or consequent of adverse functioning in attachment relationships (see for instance, Baldwin & Fehr, 1995; Laible & Thompson, 2000).

Although these limitations underline the need for replication and further exploration in future studies, overall the results of the present study convey the impression that the application of multiple RQ’s to assess attachment orientation in multiple relationships might be a fruitful avenue for further study. In contrast to other measures of adult attachment, the RQ is suitable for repeated measurement and is able to deliver insight into an individual’s attachment orientation in various relationships on the spot, albeit with the restrictions inherent to attachment selfreports. In clinical settings, the use of the RQ to measure attachment qualities in various relationships may, for instance, help clinicians to identify which relationships are particularly detrimental to their clients’ mental health, and which relationships promise support and protection as a safe haven or secure base. In research, reformulations of the RQ to assess multiple attachment orientations within individuals might be useful to further explore the question whether and how experiences in different key relationships are
integrated and how differential experiences are represented and organized in autobiographical memory.

Overall, despite the fact that most attachment researchers have focused on attachment relationships in just one domain, the present results highlight the need to study attachment in multiple domains.
Attachment in the context of multiple relationships in adulthood