

## THE CONTENT VALIDITY OF THE ADULT ATTACHMENT INTERVIEW: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION USING TEXT ANALYSIS

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The aim of this study was to conduct a preliminary investigation of the content validity of the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI). Content validity is a series of hypothesis control methods relating to the communication of facts and it can be tested using several procedures of analytical decomposition (Rositi, 1988). In order to evaluate the content validity of a text, Sireci (1998), Sireci and Geisinger (1992, 1995), and Ding (2005) suggested the integration within this technique of multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis. The aim of this study was to conduct a preliminary investigation of the content validity of the AAI, as proposed in the literature. We hypothesized that participants with the same attachment style would use similar semantic systems, and that people who belong to different categories of attachment would use divergent semantic systems. Overall, 80 participants volunteered to take part in this research. Of these, 62% exhibited a secure attachment style, 20% a dismissing style, 14% a preoccupied style, and 4% an unresolved style. The interviews were coded in double blind trials by two expert codifiers. We created a textual corpus composed of the interview transcripts, which was processed using T-Lab software (Lancia, 2004). For each interview, the illustrative variable "attachment style" was indicated. Specificity analysis and cluster analysis were used. Results confirmed the bond between attachment representations. In particular, we observed that secure participants resorted to metacognitive processes, while dismissive participants were prone to idealization and lack of recall, and preoccupied participants primarily exhibited anger, blame, and a desire to close themselves off from the past.

Key words: Content validity; Content analysis; Cluster analysis; Adult attachment; Mental representations.

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### INTRODUCTION

The concept of content validity has been controversial since its inception. The first definition was given by Lennon (1956), who described content validity as the degree of correspondence between answers to items and answers from a wider universe of reference. This definition included content validity within the area of psychometric criteria of test validity, and in 1966 it was integrated in the *Standards for educational and psychological tests and manuals* published by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council of Measurement in Education (NCME).

*Standards* (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1974) described content validity as a demonstration of a specific type of content to which the test refers. This text includes the definition, representation, and relevance of the domain in psychological measures.

In line with the most recent version of *Standards* (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999), which emphasizes a unitary conceptualization of validity, we underline the importance of the content domain. In fact, in this edition, the expression “content validity” became “content-related evidence of validity” (Sireci, 1998), which refers to the degree to which samples of items, tasks, or questions are representative of a predefined universe or content domain.

The main procedure for evaluating content validity is the expert judge technique (Crocker, Miller, & Franks, 1989; Osterlind, 1989). This technique is employed in studies in which experts evaluate items, and rate them according to their relevance and representativeness of the content domain. Sireci and Geisinger (1992, 1995) proposed the integration within this technique of the methods of multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis, as they can reveal the structure of a content domain, when a text composed of items is used (Ding, 2005; Sireci, 1998).

Sireci (1998) believed that these methods may reveal the areas of content that are present in the text through clusters located in a multidimensional space, where groups of items for different content areas are discriminated. The level of similarity between items emphasizes the convergence or differentiation of different portions of the text content. Deville (1996) proposed including the answers to items and their importance within Sireci and Geisinger’s (1992, 1995) method.

Since a content analysis of these Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) transcripts has not yet been performed, the general aim of this study was to conduct a preliminary investigation of content validity of the AAI (Main, Goldwyn, & Hesse, 2002). In particular, content analysis is a survey method based on a categorical scale; it is composed of a series of techniques, designed to classify the information contained in oral or written material (Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 1980). The central aspect of this procedure is the decomposition into classification units coinciding with the units of context. Known as a thematic analysis in McClelland’s (1961) definition, content analysis is described as a multi-stage process requiring the development of categories to codify the thematic content, and also requiring the identification of materials and suitable statistical data analysis. Therefore, message content is conceived as a window, allowing researchers to understand the characteristics of a participant or a group (Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1990). For these reasons, content analysis is considered a procedure halfway between qualitative and quantitative analysis.

### Adult Attachment Theory

Bowlby’s (1979) attachment theory provides a unique and comprehensive account of the normative and individual differences in the processes that generate emotions in close relationships. The individual difference component articulates how an individual’s personal history of receiving care and support from attachment figures across his/her life span shapes the goals, working models, and coping strategies that he/she will use when emotion-eliciting stimuli or events occur in the context of relationships. Following Bowlby’s formulation, most research on the significance of early attachment for later relationships relies on the distinction between secure and insecure attachment experiences (Waters & Cummings, 2000).

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An enormous amount of research has been conducted since Ainsworth and her students (e.g., Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) first identified individual differences between infants in the use of various attachment strategies (Cassidy & Shaver, 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Ainsworth and colleagues named three main categories of attachment with regard to infants: free, dismissing, and entangled. This terminology was applied to adults by Main et al. (2002), who used the terms secure, dismissing, and preoccupied.

Kobak and Sceery (1988) suggested that the way in which individuals perceive and manage emotions in relationships depends on the nature of the working models formed in response to their specific attachment histories. Secure attachment is organized according to rules that allow individuals to acknowledge distress and to turn to others for support; avoidant attachment is organized according to rules that restrict the acknowledgement of distress and the associated attempts to seek comfort and support; for preoccupied attachment, rules direct individuals' attention toward distress and attachment figures in a hypervigilant manner that inhibits the development of autonomy and self-confidence.

In an extension of these ideas, Mikulincer and Shaver (2003) proposed a process model that outlines the conditions under which the attachment system should be activated and terminated in individuals who are securely attached. When potential threats are perceived, secure individuals should remain confident that their current attachment figures will be attentive, responsive, and available to meet their needs and mitigate their distress. These beliefs should increase their feelings of security, thereby deactivating their attachment systems and allowing them to use constructive, problem-focused coping strategies. Insecurely-attached individuals (dismissing and preoccupied), on the other hand, should be more likely to experience attachment system activation, which motivate them to adopt interpersonal self-focused strategies, in order to compensate for uncertainty about their partners' responses. Recently, Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) stated that the major insecure attachment patterns are associated with relatively poor adjustment and, in some cases, psychopathology at various phases of life span.

Different aspects of attachment theory and adult relationships have led to the development of a variety of assessment methods. These methods, developed from attachment theory, are self-reports or interviews. Hazan and Shaver (1987) created the first questionnaire to measure attachment in adults. It was designed to classify adults according to the three attachment styles identified by Ainsworth et al. (1978). The questionnaire consisted of three sets of statements, each describing an attachment style. An important advance in attachment questionnaires was the use of independent items to assess attachment. Investigators have created several questionnaires using this strategy to measure adult attachment. Two popular measures of this type are the Experiences in Close Relationships questionnaire (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) and the Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised questionnaire (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000).

In contrast, the AAI is designed to generate inferences about defenses associated with an adult's current state of mind, regarding one's childhood relationships with one's parents. The central hypothesis suggests that parents' mental representations of childhood attachment experiences — as manifested in language — strongly influence the quality of their child's attachment to them. It is hypothesized that an adult's evaluation of childhood experiences and their influence on current functioning will become organized into a relatively stable state of mind with regard to attachment (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985).

The AAI is based on two assumptions: first, that autobiographical memory is the ongoing reconstruction of one's own past in light of new experiences, and second, that the idealization of

the past, particularly of negative experiences, can be traced by studying the form and content of the autobiographical narrative (van Ijzendoorn, 1995). As highlighted by Simonelli and Sironi (2004), narrative methods of attachment evaluation are constructed in order to confront the participant with mental processes related to attachment.

The possibility of classification is based upon the existing correspondence between the organization of the mental world and some characteristics of narration (Main, 1995). Unlike observational methods, the perspective based on mental representations provides a representation of attachments, constructed after childhood, in terms of thought processes and the ability to revise one's past experiences (Simonelli & Sironi, 2004). Individual differences can be redefined as individual differences in the representational and meta-representational elaboration of attachment experiences, in light of the observation that there is a distinction between the mental processes of secure and insecure participants.

As observed by Ortu, Dazzi, De Coro, Pola, and Speranza (1992), secure participants provide fluid and integrated narratives of their childhood experiences, and know how to appraise the influence of these experiences on their mental state. In contrast, dismissing participants devalue their attachment experiences and provide a narrative that is poor with regard to memories, while preoccupied participants are involved in precocious attachment experiences and provide a confused and untruthful narrative.

Narrative ability has the fundamental role of leading to the creation of shared histories, from which particular forms of behavior derive. Narrative competence influences the internal world and has an effect on the modulation of emotions and self-organization (Siegel, 2001).

#### AIM AND HYPOTHESES

The aim of this study was to conduct a preliminary investigation of the content validity of the AAI, as proposed by Sireci (1998) and Ding (2005). The emergence of similar words and similar semantic structures may indicate both content validity and that specific jargon is typical of different attachment styles. In accordance with Main's (1995) work, we suggested that the bond between attachment behavior and its representation resides in this narrative style.

Specifically, we hypothesized that:

H<sub>1</sub> = distinctive elements would emerge in the responses of participants, belonging to a specific attachment style;

H<sub>2</sub> = different semantic content would emerge in the responses of participants with different attachment styles.

#### METHOD

##### Participants

A total of 80 Italian employees volunteered to take part in this study. Participants' mean age was 39 (*SD* = 10.34). Sixty percent of participants were men, and 40% were women. Their average seniority was 12.37 years (*SD* = 8.42). Fifty-five percent of participants described themselves as public sector employees, and 45% as private sector employees. The mean number of

years of education was 14.5 ( $SD = 1.8$ ). Of the participants, 50 (62%) showed a secure attachment style, 16 (20%) an avoidant style, 11 (14%) a preoccupied style, and three (4%) an unresolved style. As there were so few of them, participants classified as unresolved were not included in the analysis. In our group of 77 participants, none had a “cannot classify” (CC) style of attachment.

### Measures

In order to measure the attachment style, we used the AAI (Main et al., 2002), which is composed of 20 questions taking an average of 60 minutes to answer. It evaluates participants' mental representation of attachment, and their perceived family experiences in relation to attachment. Participants were asked to give an overview of their childhood relationships with their parents and to provide sets of five adjectives, describing their childhood relationship with each parent. They were then invited to cite incidents or experiences from childhood that could illustrate or explain the choice of each adjective. Next, feelings of rejection, experiences of being upset, ill or hurt, separations, losses, and abuse were investigated. Participants were also encouraged to discuss changes in relationships with parents since childhood, to describe current relationships with them, and to explain their understanding of their parents' behavior. Finally, participants were prompted to consider the effects of early childhood experiences on their adult personality and parenting, as well as concerns and hopes for their children.

The psychometric properties of the AAI were evaluated by George, Kaplan, and Main (1984). Today, the AAI is one of the most reliable and valid tools for the measurement of adult attachment (van Ijzendoorn, 1995), and it allows attachment to be appraised through the analysis of narratives produced by adults and the identification of internal working models of the self and attachment. The relevant literature has provided evidence that the AAI has satisfactory reliability (Bakermans-Kranenburg & van Ijzendoorn, 1993; Cassidy & Shaver, 2008; Sagi, Donnell, van Ijzendoorn, Mayseless, & Aviezer, 1994; van Ijzendoorn, 1995) and discriminant validity. The categories of attachment used in the interview do not differ in their scores for levels of memory, intelligence, and social desirability (Bakermans-Kranenburg & van Ijzendoorn, 1993; Cassidy & Shaver, 2008).

The interview allows five classifications of attachment: secure, preoccupied, dismissing, unresolved, and cannot be classified (Main et al., 2002). The coding process is composed of two separate parts: first, the content and text form are analyzed using nine continuous scales, then a final classification of the participant's attachment style is assigned. Scales are separated into subjective experience scales (loving, rejecting, neglecting, role reversal, and pressure to achieve) and state of mind scales (idealizing, involving anger, derogation, insistence upon lack of recall, metacognitive processes, passivity of thought processes, fear of loss, unresolved loss/unresolved trauma, coherence of transcript, and coherence of mind). The dimensions of idealization, derogation and insistence upon lack of recall characterize the dismissing attachment style, while the anger and passivity scales characterize preoccupied participants, and the metacognitive and coherence dimensions define secure participants.

The coding was carried out by two expert codifiers and we applied Cohen's kappa index (Landis & Koch, 1977) in order to appraise the reliability of coding. Interrater agreement was

calculated, and data revealed a high level of agreement between judges ( $\alpha = .85$ ). The coders achieved 82% agreement over the four classifications (secure, dismissing, preoccupied, cannot be classified). Disagreements between coders were settled through discussion.

### Procedure

First, we individually administered the AAI, with average length of 63 minutes per interview (range: 42-78). The interviews were audiotaped, and the verbatim transcripts were rated on 15 9-point scales measuring adult attachment style. Then, we assigned an attachment category to each interview and created a textual corpus, comprising the interviews transcripts. Such corpus was composed of 80 texts, processed using T-Lab software (Lancia, 2004). For each interview, the illustrative variable, or “attachment style,” was indicated.

Specifically, after the corpus was processed, we performed a preliminary preparation of the text. We carried out an examination of polyforms, or multiple words (i.e., attachment\_style). This procedure allowed the presence of phrases with one semantic value to be highlighted. Subsequently, we proceeded with a disambiguation of lexical forms in order to point out the semantic differences between homographic words. Finally, we identified the structures and the headwords of the corpus and chose a list of keywords. In T-Lab systems, the keywords list is based on the total number of occurrences (quantitative criterion) and on the qualitative importance of items (Lancia, 2004).

### Statistical Analysis

The analysis resulted in 235 keywords. Specificity analysis and cluster analysis were used. Specificity analysis allowed us to extract the words typical of each attachment category as well as those which were used exclusively in one of the three subsets considered (secure, avoidant, preoccupied). In T-Lab, this method of analysis allowed the identification of the exclusive lexical units of the subsets of the corpus (defined by the “attachment style” variable, or rather by words present in the subset in question and not in the others). To the extracted words  $\chi^2$  test with  $p < .05$  (one degree of freedom) was applied.

Cluster analysis was carried out using Ward's (1963) method. Words were then included into clusters, represented on a Cartesian space, and related to each category of attachment. Cluster analysis allowed words and variables with the greatest similarity and the greatest difference to be grouped and explained. Ward's method starts treating each individual observation as a cluster. These clusters are gradually agglomerated into one large cluster on the basis of a proximity measure, using a predefined fusion algorithm (based on the analysis of variance approach). In order to enable the identification of robust groups of observations, we stopped using the fusion algorithm at the point in which clusters were as homogenous as possible internally, and as heterogeneous as possible in relation to all the other clusters. The parsimony criterion and the relative increment of the agglomeration coefficient were used to determine the optimal number of clusters to retain (Dillon & Goldstein, 1984).

## Results

As shown in Table 1, participants with a secure attachment style used terms that can be included in the metacognitive processes dimension, such as “to believe,” “to decide,” “awareness,” and “choice.” The fact that “mentality” is among the specificities for defect reveals the presence of room for dialogue and negotiation, that seems to prevent secure people from adhering rigidly to norms. Words such as “point of reference” (e.g., “My mom’s sister is a point of reference for me, I felt as if she was my mom”), “protective” (e.g., “It has never been a distressing relationship, she was protective of me”) and “tied up” (e.g., “My attitudes toward my aunt and uncle have always been very tied up”) underline the fact that attachment is valued and highlight the existence of feelings expressed to describe attachment experiences. Furthermore, the word “independent” (e.g., “She has had a very positive influence on my personality, always making sure that her child could be independent”) suggests the presence of autonomy in relationships. To conclude, the negative use of the term “to get mad” is evidence of the low presence of anger.

TABLE 1  
 Output table of specificity analysis for the secure attachment category

Lemmas	Secure		
	$\chi^2$	Subtotal	Total
To believe	17.58	187	255
To decide	17.77	38	45
Point of reference	10.33	29	33
Awareness	9.74	22	24
Tied up	8.74	43	48
Protective	8.61	34	41
Choice	6.70	55	73
Independent	6.53	25	30
Feeling	6.12	13	14
To separate	6.12	45	59
Dialogue	5.72	33	42
Safety	5.22	47	63
To express	4.87	11	12
Present	4.77	131	192
Attached	4.73	33	43
To get mad	-35.11	3	32
Mentality	-22.75	7	34
Support	-9.76	4	17
Tragedy	-5.75	5	16

Note. All  $\chi^2$  values are significant,  $p < .05$ .

As shown in Table 2, avoidant adults used terms such as “I don’t remember” (e.g., “The table was to be always set, because it was the best moment, being at the table, and I do not clearly remember those times”) and “not remembering” (e.g., “I find it normal not to remember those

times”) which point out a lack of memory. On the other hand, “loving” (e.g., “Where loving my parents was the most important thing”), “thoughtful,” “respectful” (e.g., “My father was thoughtful and respectful with women”), and “beauty” (e.g., “Mom was generous and affectionate, my mom was a beautiful woman. I remember that she was a beautiful young woman and a good mother. Then, I do not remember much”) emphasize the dimension of idealization.

TABLE 2  
 Output table of specificity analysis for the avoidant attachment category

Lemmas	Avoidant		
	$\chi^2$	Subtotal	Total
To impart	52.03	10	12
Loving	45.66	9	11
Thoughtfully	40.46	14	25
Respectfully	33.23	12	22
Do not remember	30.41	200	1070
Beautiful	24.09	77	352
Refuse	13.66	11	31
Dissatisfaction	13.61	10	27
I don't remember	12.31	23	90
To educate	8.59	10	33
To improve	8.38	6	16
Normal	6.81	25	118
To play	6.72	30	148

Note. All  $\chi^2$  values are significant,  $p < .05$ .

The exclusive use of the words “refusal” (e.g., “...is an innate feeling for children. I can say it was a refusal and felt neglected because there was a little sister”) and “dissatisfied” (e.g., “I felt dissatisfied toward myself, as there was my sister”) reveal the significant influence of the rejection dimension. The use of the term “normal” (e.g., “...because I think that is normal between father and son, but I’ve never been threatened”) points to a tendency toward normalization and minimization of distress, that is typical of avoidant attachment, as confirmed by the negative use of “mother” and “important.” Similarly, the term “to play” suggests the appeal to avoidant people of an emphasis on activities and fun (e.g., “...my mother complained to me because I was always playing with my friends. It was the only way to have fun”), while the word “to impart” indicates their preference for rigid educational norms (Mikulincer, 1998) (for instance: “I think it is right that the father imparts the rules. My father made the general rules; the rules of a practical nature were imparted by my mother”).

As regards preoccupied participants, as shown in Table 3, the expressions “to get mad” (e.g., “...and it hurts my son and then I get mad! Then there are arguments because of this”), “contradiction” (e.g., “...is a contradiction because I felt protected, I was happy, but I was always fearful”), “to rub in,” “to cry,” “to bother” (e.g., “It bothers me to stand there in front [of them] to cry, but not because I don’t want to cry but because I feel weak”), and “to go nuts” underline the involvement of the dimension of anger and the tendency to blame others. This is also confirmed

by the terms “fear” and “anxiety” (e.g., “Maybe everything I had inside, what I was in childhood, my anxiety, my fear, came out later, after 30 years”). On the other hand, “slap” (e.g., “...Now I do not think you can raise a child without giving him or her a slap on the ass”), “fear,” “death,” “to suffer”, and “funeral” (e.g., “First, my grandmother died, and then, after a few years, my grandfather died. I was 20 and I suffered a lot. I was very shocked, because I saw them routinely”) underline the need to break with the past and traumatic experiences.

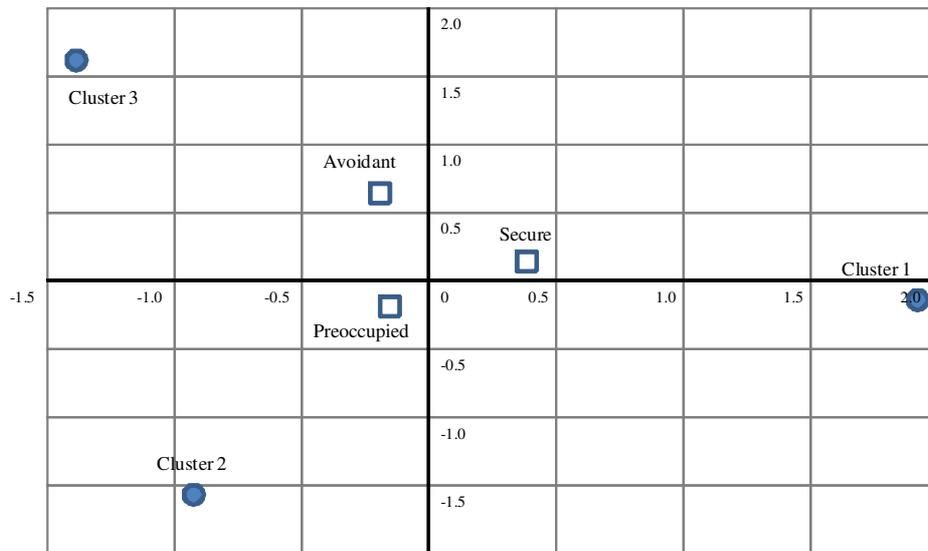
TABLE 3  
 Output table of specificity analysis for the preoccupied attachment category

Lemmas	Preoccupied		
	$\chi^2$	Subtotal	Total
To get mad	146.23	28	32
Contradiction	54.81	11	13
To get used to	50.73	23	46
Fear	37.98	58	202
To admire	32.11	8	11
To cry	31.22	43	140
Slap	19.79	17	47
To bother	14.57	22	50
To suffer	14.25	12	22
To rub in	13.60	9	22
Anxiety	13.21	12	34
To get angry	9.15	11	35
Death	7.82	18	54
To refuse	7.56	7	20
Funeral	7.54	14	52
To go nuts	6.74	8	17
To bear	5.77	6	18
To strike	5.05	6	19
Violence	4.71	4	11
Respect	-11.11	2	96
Present	-9.26	12	192
Trauma	-6.02	1	51
To disturb	-5.86	1	50
Disturbed	-4.29	2	59

Note. All  $\chi^2$  value are significant,  $p < .05$ .

### Cluster Analysis

In our data, an abrupt change in the relative increment of the agglomeration coefficient occurred when four clusters were merged into three. Thus, we obtained three clusters, each characterized by a category of attachment (Figure 1). Cluster 1 (explained variance = 25.69%) represented secure participants ( $\chi^2 = 3.85$ ,  $p < .05$ ), cluster 2 (explained variance = 40.36%) represented preoccupied participants ( $\chi^2 = 15.02$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and cluster 3 (explained variance = 33.95%) represented avoidant participants ( $\chi^2 = 13.30$ ,  $p < .01$ ).



*Note.* Circles represent clusters extracted from the analysis; squares represent the position of the explanatory variables in the plot. A smaller distance between cluster and the explanatory variable indicates a higher degree of association between them.

FIGURE 1  
 Dimensional space of cluster analysis.

As shown in Table 4, in accordance with specificity analysis, the first clusters (secure) encompassed the words which referred to metacognitive activity (to believe, to decide, dialogue) and to the fact of valuing attachment (availability, trust, to love). In the second cluster (preoccupied), the presence of anger (to get mad) and blame (guilt, to desire, desire, to be convinced) was observed. The presence of the term “attachment” suggests the use of psychological jargon (psychobabble). The third cluster encompassed the dimension of idealization and indicated the experience of refusal. This cluster was associated with variables of the avoidant attachment modality. In particular, the presence of the words “happiness” and “love” suggests the tendency to minimize negative experiences, as it can also be deduced by the presence of the terms “separation,” “pain” and “lack,” which suggest negative experiences.

## DISCUSSION

Content validity is based on the correspondence between the content being investigated by the measure and a given domain. The absence of a robust analysis of content validity of the AAI stimulated our interest in verifying how semantic speaking modalities can be used in order to explain the specificities of attachment styles. Our contribution must be understood as a first attempt to study content validity as well as an alternative way of analyzing the AAI.

As demonstrated by results, specificity analysis and cluster analysis allowed the words used by members of every attachment category to be identified. Results show that two distinct methods of analysis (judges and software) on the same content are coherent. In fact, T-Lab analy-

TABLE 4  
 T-Lab output table of cluster analysis

Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Cluster 3	
Lemmas	Occurrence	Lemmas	Occurrence	Lemmas	Occurrence
Mother	1112	Home	554	Parent	559
Child	417	Beautiful	329	Brother	308
To believe	238	Child	285	To grow up	206
Different	153	Friend	216	Happiness	70
Education	108	Affection	151	Detachment	61
Sorrow	48	Change	146	Love	60
To decide	45	To know	128	Pain	58
Closed	44	Ugly	105	Too frequent	43
To accompany	41	Companion	66	Generosity	41
To wish	41	Teaching	58	Separation	40
Happy	41	Attachment	76	Lack	37
Availability	40	To be convinced	45		
Dialogue	37	To accept	40		
Good	36	Desire	34		
Trust	30	To get mad	31		
To love	28	Distance	30		
		Guilt	24		
		To desire	21		
Variable	$\chi^2$	Variable	$\chi^2$	Variable	$\chi^2$
Secure	3.85	Preoccupied	15.02	Avoidant	13.30

Note.  $\chi^2$  values of variables are significant,  $p < .05$ ;  $\chi^2$  values of words are significant,  $p < .01$ .

sis provided evidence for reliability of AAI coding system and the constructs that it measures. This coherence may be used to evaluate the quality of judges' coding process; we think that it is a possible indicator of the reliability of using computer-based analysis when coding the AAI. Therefore, we suggest that this procedure is used to support the AAI classical coding system and the construct it measures. Despite the relatively small size of the sample, the analysis of the AAI text partially confirmed the dimensional structure of the attachment categories.

In accordance with Main et al.'s description (2002), individual differences in the representational and meta-representational elaboration of attachment experiences (metacognitive processes, lack of memory, valuing of attachment, involvement of anger, etc.) can be used to explain the distinction between the mental processes of secure and insecure participants. As hypothesized, our results suggest that it is possible to identify different styles of attachment on the basis of the lexicon used (Fyffe & Waters, 1997; Main, 1995; Simonelli & Sironi, 2004). Secure participants displayed metacognitive processes and valuing of attachment; dismissing participants showed lack of memory, rejection, and normalization; and preoccupied participants presented closing in one's past and involvement of anger. This draws attention to the correspondence between the content of the interviews and a defined universe or content domain (Sireci, 1998). Moreover, no content was theoretically extraneous to the investigated domain.

Due to the characteristics of the analyses carried out, it has not been possible to trace two salient characteristics for the attribution of attachment categories: speech passivity (e.g., the ability of using vague phrases or nonsensical words, and that of wandering over irrelevant topics) and the coherence of the transcript. Finally, because respondents categorized as unresolved and CC were absent, we suggest repeating the study with a larger group of participants, including clinical respondents.

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