Investigations of interpersonal attachment, and its environmental analogue, attachment to place, have been topics of great interest to researchers for many years. More recently however, the possibility of a parallel working model of attachment to people and place, and the extension of the attachment behavioural system to examine core environmental relationships has gained interest (Giuliani, 2003; Morgan, 2010). The current study, with a sample of 501 adults, examined the structure of the network of places in which people live and how they relate to those places. It investigated the question of whether or not relationships with place can be classified as ‘attachment bonds’, examined interpersonal attachment style differences in the composition of attachment networks and considered the effect that those networks have upon a person’s subjective well-being and happiness.

Participants completed a series of rating scale measures of interpersonal and environmental attachment. Consistent with predictions, relationships with several types of place were confirmed as attachment bonds based on the use of those places for a range of attachment functions (e.g. using the place as a safe haven and secure base; evidence of hypothetical sense of loss). Attachment style differences in the interaction between people and the places listed in their attachment network were illustrated and the positive effect that environmental attachment networks have upon subjective well-being and happiness were confirmed.

Overall the current research suggests empirical support for the proposed theoretical links between interpersonal and place attachment, and the proposition that our relationships with place are attachment bonds with similar characteristics to those identified for interpersonal attachment. Theoretical implications as well as future directions for research are outlined in relation to the findings.