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# Attachment Styles Affect on Parasocial Relationships

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## Introduction

Parasocial interaction and relationships are a topic that grows in popularity for those who study media and media effects. The original concept was created by Horton and Wohl (1956), stating that parasocial interactions are referred to as a media user's reaction to a celebrity or character such that the media user perceives the performer as a friend or romantic conversational partner (Dibble, et al, 2015). Personal relationships are often altered by one's attachment style. Through further research the attachment theory can help further understand how individuals interaction with friends, family, and celebrities based on their attachment style (Cole, Leets, 1999).

## Research Questions

An individual's attachment styles may explain why they have more of a tendency to develop a parasocial relationship. For example, an anxious attachment style, which is seen most often in parasocial relationships, the need to belong tends to be very high.

**RQ1: How does a person's attachment style affect their likelihood to have a parasocial relationship?**

In terms of gender differences in attachment, there is little reason to expect that boys or girls feel more or less secure regarding the availability and responsiveness of their parents. Therefore, the manner in which attachment needs are communicated may vary across genders, as children are socialized to understand that which it is appropriate or inappropriate to express (Dwyer, 2005).

**RQ2: Does gender affect the level of severity in the parasocial relationship?**

## Methods and Results

The researchers studied the data of the students between the ages of 18 and 21 years old. Of the 1,286 undergraduate students sent the survey at the university in the fall of 2022, 139 participated in the study by responding to the survey. The overall response rate was approximately 11%. Of those 139, 78 of them fell into the researchers' desired age range. The results of these 78 participants were then analyzed--6% response rate.

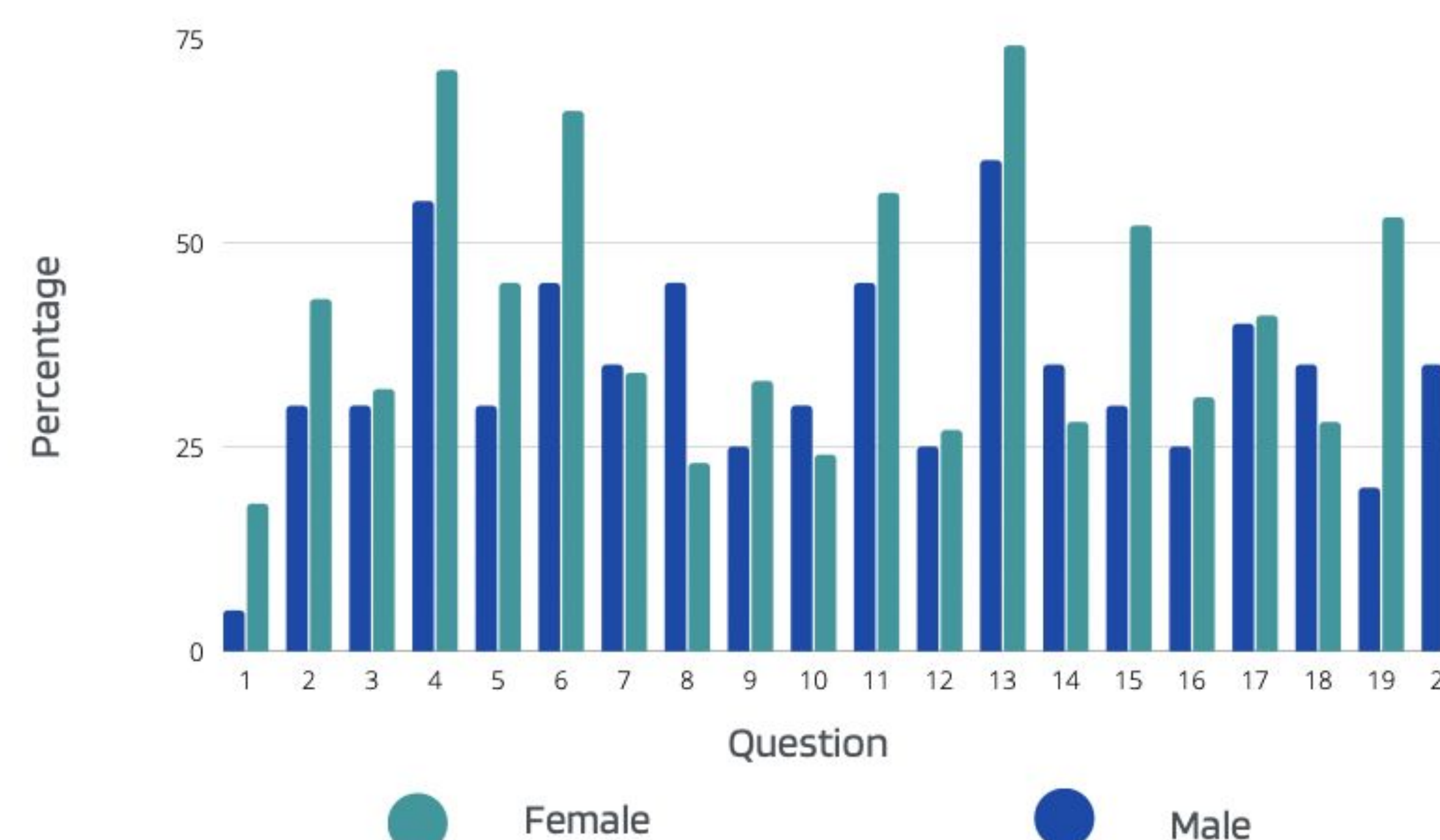
The researchers first measured the difference in means between the two extremes: secure attachment style and anxious attachment style.

Similarly to the first research question the researchers aimed to answer, for the second research question a two-group T-Test was used to find any significant correlation between the parasocial scores among the two genders tested ( $p > 0.290108$ ).

Researchers failed to reject the null hypothesis with p values  $> 0.05$

Secure vs. Anxious
$p = 0.29018$

## Gender & Severity



## Discussion

### Family Communication Patterns Theory

Families create a shared social reality through the process of coorientation and the subsequent reformulation of the model as a theory of interpersonal behavior. Such repeated behavior in the home can form one's communication, attachment, and future relationships (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2005).

### Social Information Processing Theory

Joseph Walther (1996) suggests that individuals can still form meaningful relationships despite having limitations due to mediated channels of communication. For example, TV, computers, social media, and cell phones. This encourages viewers to be able to form a meaningful and realistic one-sided relationships with a celebrity or social media influencer.

## Limitations & Future Research

The most significant limitation in this study was the lack of data due to a low response rate. In the future, researchers could expand their sample size by administering the survey to multiple midwestern universities.

## References

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