



The Physiological Effects of Ghosting and How it Relates to One's Attachment Style



FSU College of Health and Human Sciences
Isabel Sosa & Emily Citrano, Dr. Mickey Langlais, The FSU Institute of Sports Sciences and Medicine

Abstract:

Various studies have started to explore the role of ghosting for psychological health.

- Freedman et al. (2022): people who ghosted someone were more likely to express guilt and relief, whereas those who were ghosted were more likely to express sadness and hurt feelings.

The physiological effects of ghosting are still unknown. Therefore, we plan to assess physiological measures before and after someone has been ghosted to understand potential physiological effects. Past studies have shown that *rejection* in romantic relationships has significant negative effects on psychological and physical well-being, but while ghosting is *similar* to rejection, it's also uniquely different.

- **Ghosting**: when one person suddenly ignores or stops communicating with another person, without telling them (Kay and Courtrice, 2022)
- Initial studies reveal a negative relationship with ghosting and psychological well-being but no studies to our knowledge have examined the physiological effects of ghosting

Introduction:

Attachment Styles:

- Avoidant: uncomfortable with intimacy and being close with others; values independence and freedom
- Anxious: someone who craves intimacy and is often insecure about their relationship with people; worries of abandonment
- Secure: comfortable with intimacy and is not someone who is concerned with rejection; low avoidance and low anxiety

FSU Institute of Sports Sciences: a state-of-the-art research laboratory dedicated to optimizing health, body composition, and human performance

Methods:

Participants will be recruited under the guise that we are testing a "match-making service"

Day One: Those interested will be scheduled for their first visit at the ISSM and meet with a research assistant (RA). Participants will:

- sign the consent form
- tour the ISSM to become familiar and comfortable with the environment
- complete an online survey, asking questions about their hobbies, personality, demographics, self-esteem, their phone number, and their attachment avoidance and anxiety and upload a photo of themselves at the end

Once they are done, they're scheduled for their next visit and asked to download "Snapchat"

Day Two: (second visit) participants will come to ISSM and have their physiological data collected (BP, HR monitoring, and body composition, and provide saliva samples) Participants will:

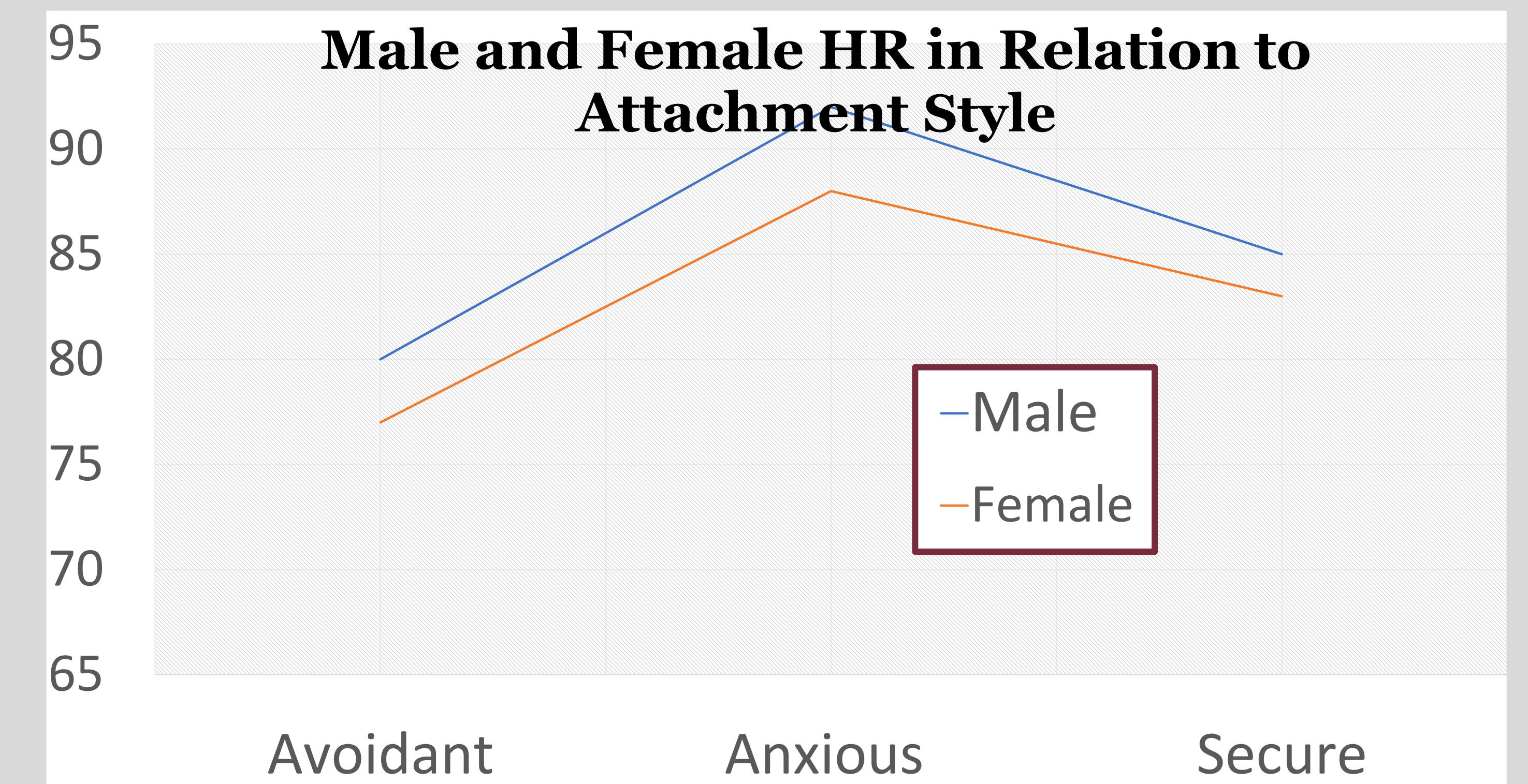
- be shown 40 pictures that are other people in the "match-making database" and pick the one they find most attractive
- be told that the one they selected matched with and that given the "other individual is interested" we will get them in contact with each other using the chat feature on Snapchat.

After 1-2 minutes, the RA will start texting the participant and flirting using a script provided to them.

After 15 minutes, the RA will immediately stop texting the participant.

After another 15 minutes, a RA will come in and perform a BP measurement and participants will provide a saliva sample. Participants will then be debriefed and informed about the true goal of the study.

Expected Results:



Those with a more anxious attachment styles will show higher BP, HR, and cortisol levels in saliva than those with a secure or avoidant attachment style.

Acknowledgments:

Dr. Mickey Langlais for guiding me through this project as my mentor. Dr. Michael Ormsbee and the ISSM for allowing us to use their lab and equipment for this project. Emily Citrano my research partner for allowing me to take part in bringing this project together

Resources:

- Gili Freedman, Darcey N. Powell, Benjamin Le & Kipling D. Williams (2022) Emotional experiences of ghosting, The Journal of Social Psychology, DOI: [10.1080/00224545.2022.2081528](https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2022.2081528)
- "ISSM - FSU College of Health and Human Sciences." *College of Health and Human Sciences*, 14 Oct. 2022, healthandhumansciences.fsu.edu/nutrition-integrative-physiology/centers-institutes/issm/.
- Levy, Terry. "Four Styles of Adult Attachment." *Evergreen Psychotherapy Center*, 26 May 2017, evergreenpsychotherapycenter.com/styles-adult-attachment/.