



# The Association Between Conduct Disorder and Insecure Attachment: A Meta-Analysis

Kristene Cheung<sup>1</sup>, Jennifer Theule<sup>1</sup>, Sarah Germain<sup>1</sup>, & Clarisa Merkel<sup>2</sup>



1. Department of Psychology, University of Manitoba  
2. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto

## Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

- Prevalence estimates range from 1% to 11% (APA, 2013)
- Characterized by (APA, 2013)
  - Angry/Irritable mood
  - Argumentative/Defiant Behaviour
  - Vindictiveness

## Conduct Disorder (CD)

- Prevalence estimates range from 2% to >10% (APA, 2013)
- Key characteristics (APA, 2013)
  - Aggression to people and animals
  - Destruction of property
  - Deceitfulness or Theft
  - Serious Violations of Rules

## Attachment Styles

- Mary Ainsworth studied the quality of parent-child attachment relationships (e.g., Ainsworth, 1979)
- Categorized behaviour into two broadly labeled groups
  - Secure attachment
  - Insecure attachment

## CD/ODD and Attachment Styles

- Moderate relationship between disorganized attachment and ODD (van Ijzendoorn, Schuengel, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1999)
- Severity of conduct problems have been found to be associated with higher levels of insecure attachment (Pasalich, Dadds, Hawes, & Brennan, 2011)
- Attachment insecurity scores did not differ between children with CD and children without CD (Marron, 1998)

## Objective

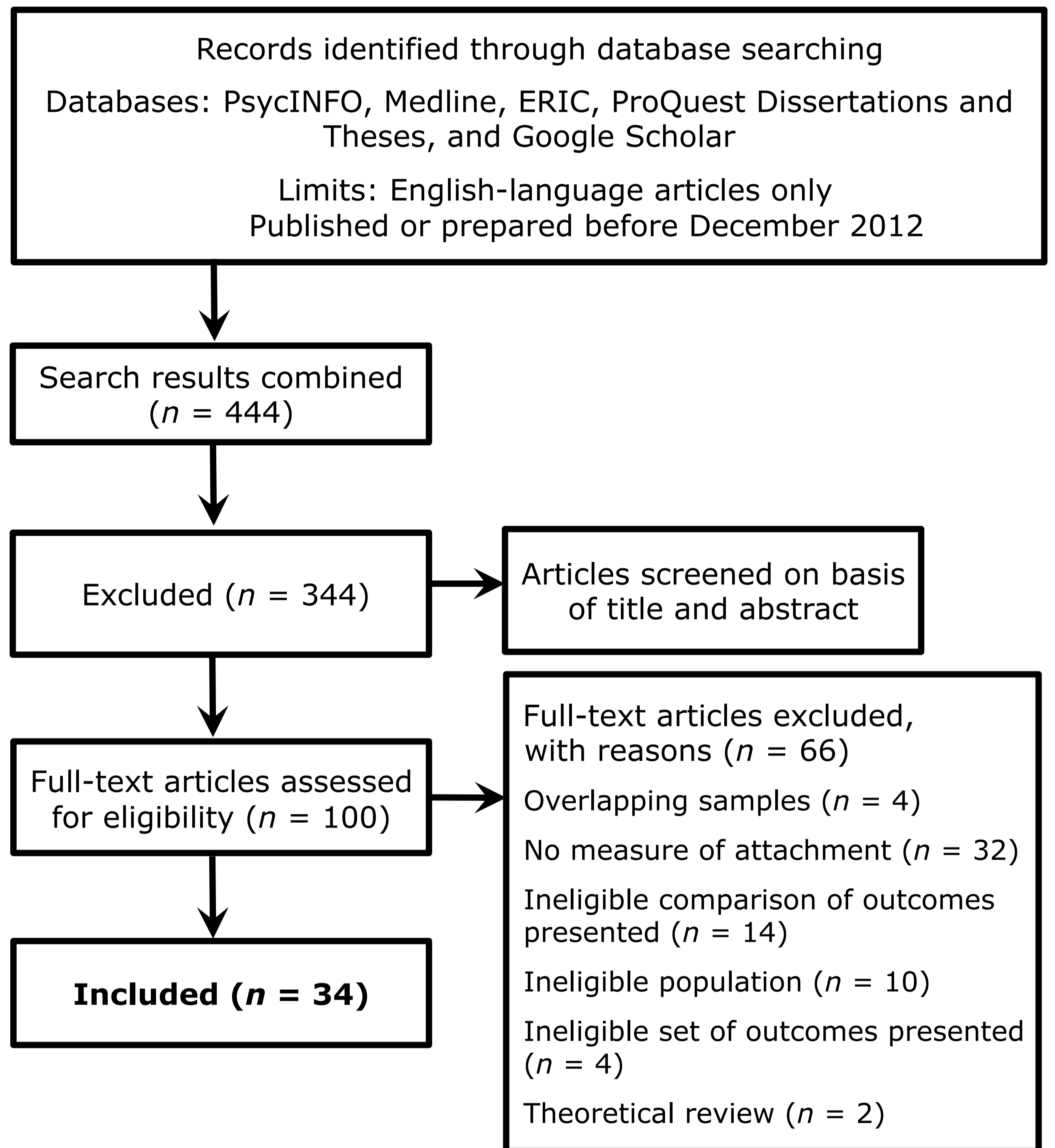
To determine a possible association between CD/ODD and insecure attachment style.

## Research Questions

- How large is the association between conduct disorder symptomology and attachment insecurity?
- What are the odds of an individual with ODD having a disorganized attachment compared to individuals without ODD?
- What are the odds of an individual with CD/ODD having an ambivalent attachment style compared to individuals without CD/ODD?
- Do individuals with CD/ODD have a higher rating of insecure attachment?

## Methods

- A meta-analysis was conducted \*



- 34 studies met eligibility criteria
  - Included 23 published and 11 unpublished reports
  - Year of publication ranged from 1990 to 2012

- Number of participants
  - Total (n = 4373)
  - With CD/ODD (n = 367)
  - With ODD only (n = 290)
  - With CD only (n = 380)
  - Without CD/ODD (n = 422)

- Each study was coded following a coding manual
- Inter-coder reliability for all variables was 100%
- Data was entered and analyzed through the Comprehensive Meta Analysis (CMA) program (Borenstein, Hedges, Higgins, & Rothstein, 2005)
- An array of effects were determined

\*Modified version of the PRISMA Flow Diagram (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The PRISMA Group, 2009)

## Results

- Based on eight different effect sizes, there was a moderate relationship between CD and insecure attachment ( $r = 0.30$ ).
- Three effect sizes indicated that individuals with ODD have 5.22 times the odds as individuals without ODD of having a disorganized attachment.
- Based on six effect sizes, individuals with CD/ODD have 2.53 times the odds as individuals without CD/ODD of having an ambivalent attachment style.
- Three different effect sizes established that the overall effect size for the relationship between CD/ODD and insecure attachment compared to individuals without CD/ODD was large ( $d = 0.96$ ).

## Discussion

- One third of the studies included were unpublished theses.
- Individuals with ODD are much more likely to have a disorganized attachment compared to individuals without ODD.
- The evidence supports a link between an insecure attachment and both ODD and CD symptoms.
- Attachment-focused therapies may be promising treatment for this clinical population.

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## Correspondence

Kristene.Cheung@umanitoba.ca or Jen.Theule@umanitoba.ca



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