

# **THE LINK BETWEEN ADULT ATTACHMENT SECURITY AND ANXIETY: A META-ANALYSIS**

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# ANXIETY

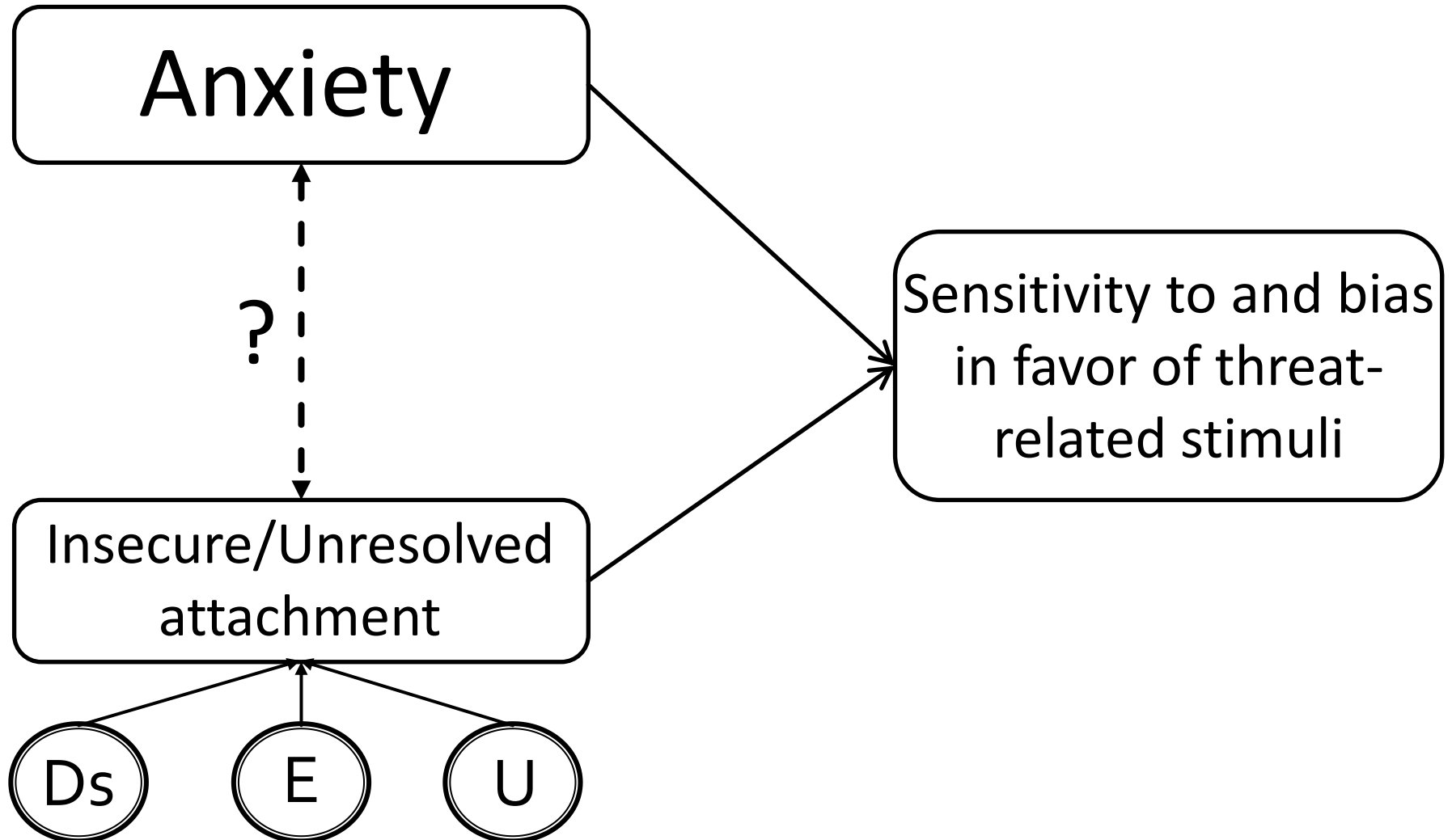
- **Anxiety Disorders:** GAD, SAD, Panic Disorder, Agoraphobia, Specific Phobia(s), Separation Anxiety Disorder, [OCD, PTSD]
- Characterized by chronic thoughts concerning the overestimation of threats and harm, and in some cases avoidance of feared objects or situations
- The second most (a) prevalent diagnosed mental illnesses across the lifespan, (b) number of years lost due to ill-health, disability or early death
- About 5-18% of individuals experience anxiety during their lifetime (subthreshold may be as high as 3 times % the full diagnosis)

# ANXIETY AND ATTACHMENT

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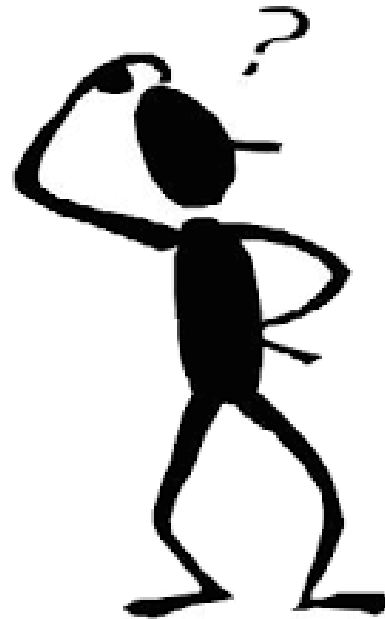
- Bowlby (1973) suggested that anxiety disorders are best accounted by early anxiety regarding the availability of attachment figure
- Secure attachment: A haven of safety from which to explore (Sroufe & Waters, 1977; Waters & Cummings, 2000)
- Bowlby (1973) and Ainsworth et al. (1978) referred to insecure infants as *anxiously* attached
- Main et al. (1985): **“The internal working model is a set of rules for obtaining or limiting access to . . . information”**

# ANXIETY AND ATTACHMENT



# ADULT ATTACHMENT AND ANXIETY: STATE OF THE FIELD

- Lack of research within the adult-developmental domain
- Out of 86 studies qualified for extraction of ES, only 2 peer reviewed articles specifically addressed anxiety; both assessed clinical populations (DSM diagnoses)



# THE CURRENT STUDY

➤ **Question 1:**

Are Insecure adults likely to be more anxious than Secure adults?

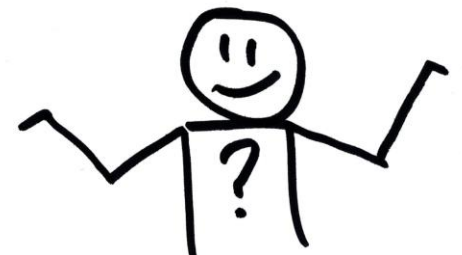
➤ **Question 2:**

Are Preoccupied adults likely to be more anxious than Dismissing adults?

➤ **Question 3:**

Are Unresolved adults likely to be more anxious than resolved adults?

➤ Examine potential moderators



# METHOD

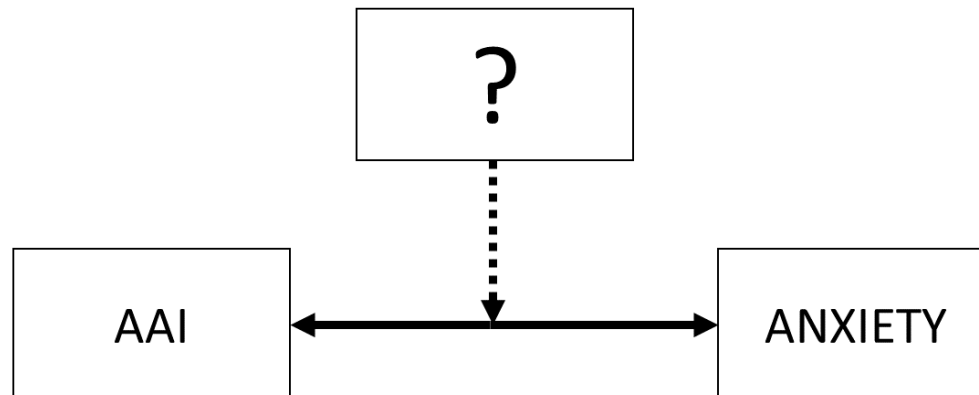
## STUDY-LEVEL VARIABLES

### ➤ **Sample characteristics**

- Age, Gender, Ethnicity, SES, Education, Parental status, Risk

### ➤ **Methodological characteristics**

- AAI: Main/Q-sort coding system
- Interval between anxiety and AAI assessments



# METHOD

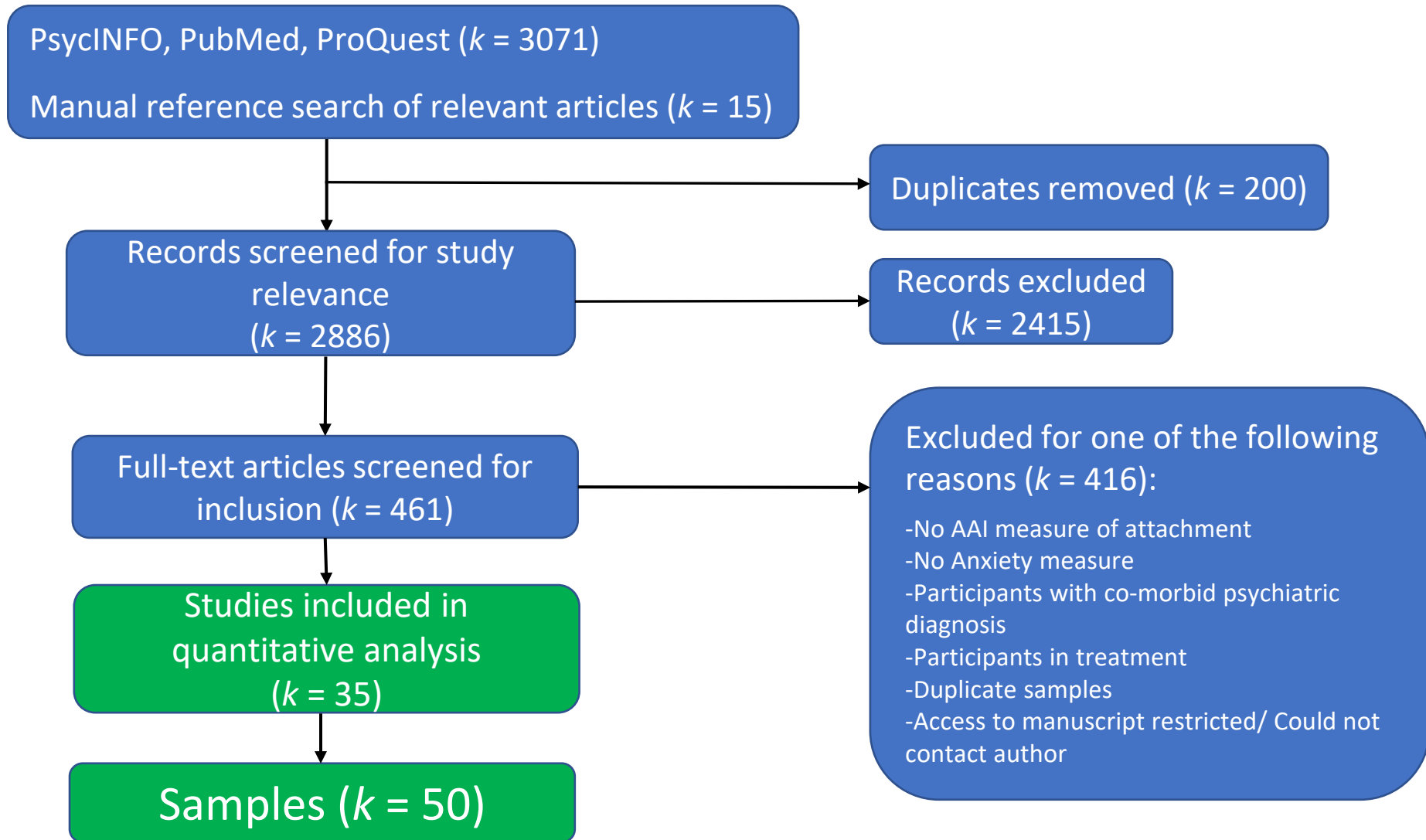
## STUDY SELECTION CRITERIA

- Systematic search (in November 2018) of PsycINFO, PubMed, ProQuest
- Key terms related to Adult Attachment, Anxiety, Psychopathology
- **Analyses**
  - Random effects models
  - Q statistic used to examine moderators
- **Inclusion criteria**
  - Attachment was assessed using the **AAI**
  - **Anxiety** was measured using a standardized assessment
  - Written in English
- **Exclusion criteria**
  - Only used a clinical sample (i.e., no control group)
  - Reported on co-morbid sample
  - Anxiety and/or AAI assessed **during/after** an intervention



# METHOD

## STUDY FLOW CHART



# METHOD

## COMPARISONS AND EFFECTS SIZE

### ➤ Comparisons (#samples):

- Secure vs. Insecure (35)
- Secure vs. Insecure-Dismissing (34)
- Secure vs. Insecure-Preoccupied (28)
- Insecure-Dismissing vs. Insecure-Preoccupied (27)
- Resolved vs. Unresolved (25)

### ➤ Effect size (Cohen's d):

- **Mean** differences in anxiety symptoms between attachment classification groups
- **Correlation** between attachment classifications and anxiety
- **Frequency** differences in attachment classifications between anxious/non-anxious groups

# RESULTS

## EFFECT SIZE PER COMPARISON

<b>Comparison</b>	<b>Cohen's <i>d</i></b> <i>*p &lt; .0005</i>	<b>95% CI</b> [low, high]	<b>Adjusted Cohen's <i>d</i></b>
<b>Secure vs. Insecure</b>	0.09	[-0.02, 0.19]	-
<b>Secure vs. Dismissing</b>	-0.04	[-0.15, 0.06]	-0.01
<b>Secure vs. Preoccupied</b>	0.51*	[0.31, 0.72]	-
<b>Dismissing vs. Preoccupied</b>	0.49*	[0.29, 0.70]	0.41
<b>Resolved vs. Unresolved</b>	0.27*	[0.14, 0.39]	0.22

*\*p < .0001*

# RESULTS

## MODERATORS

		<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>d</i>	95% CI	<i>Q</i>	<i>p</i>
<b><i>SECURE VS. DISMISSING</i></b>							
Ethnicity (% White)		26	3050	0.01*	[0.00, 0.01]	4.24	<.05
<b>SES</b>						5.78	<.05
Low	$b_0$	5	585	-0.23**	[-0.40, -0.06]		
Mid/High	$b_1$	25	2694	0.01	[-0.08, 0.09]		
<b><i>SECURE VS. PREOCCUPIED</i></b>							
Age		27	2424	0.03**	[0.01, 0.05]	8.07	<.01
<b><i>DISMISSING VS. PREOCCUPIED</i></b>							
Age		26	1491	0.03**	[0.01, 0.05]	5.69	<.05
Time Gap AAI/Anxiety						4.19	<.05
≤ 1 Month	$b_0$	12	582	0.70***	[0.40, 1.00]		
> 1 Month	$b_1$	6	224	0.13	[-0.32, 0.58]		

\* $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

# RESULTS

## INTERNALIZING SYMPTOMS

Comparison	Anxiety	Depression <sup>1</sup>
Secure vs. Insecure	0.09	0.23*
Secure vs. Dismissing	-0.04	0.12
Secure vs. Preoccupied	0.51*	0.50*
Dismissing vs. Preoccupied	0.49*	0.35*
Resolved vs. Unresolved	0.27*	0.30*

<sup>1</sup> Dagan, Facompré, & Bernard, 2018. \* $p < .0005$

# DISCUSSION

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Attachment patterns of *Insecure-Preoccupied* and *Unresolved* increases likelihood of becoming more anxious than if securely attached or resolved

# DISCUSSION

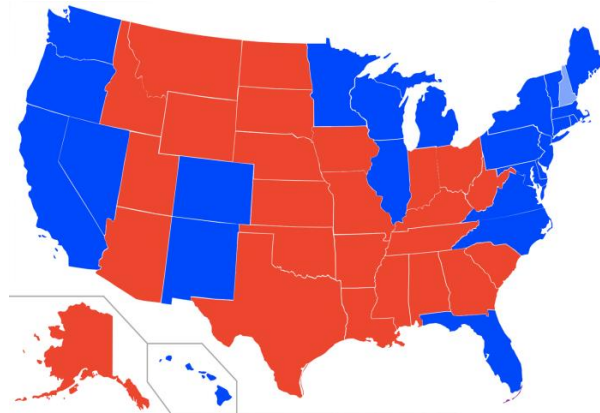
## QUESTION 1

**Are Insecure adults likely to be more anxious than Secure adults?**

➤ No

➤ It depends on the type of insecurity

- No if you are Dismissing, -0.04, 95% CI [-0.15, 0.06]
- Yes if you are Preoccupied, 0.51 95% CI [0.31, 0.72]







# DISCUSSION

## QUESTION 2

	<b>Insecure- Dismissing</b>	<b>Insecure- Preoccupied</b>
<b>Reporting style<sup>1</sup></b>	Underreporting	Overreporting

<sup>1</sup>Fortuna & Roisman, 2008; Howard et al., 2017 <sup>2</sup>Based on Williams, 1997; Fox et al., 2001, 2002 <sup>3</sup>Based on Dagan & Bernard, under review

# DISCUSSION

## QUESTION 2

	<b>Insecure- Dismissing</b>	<b>Insecure- Preoccupied</b>
<b>Reporting style<sup>1</sup></b>	Underreporting	Overreporting
<b>Information processing<sup>2</sup></b>	Attention away from threat	Maintaining attention on the source of threat

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# DISCUSSION

## QUESTION 2

	<b>Insecure- Dismissing</b>	<b>Insecure- Preoccupied</b>
<b>Reporting style<sup>1</sup></b>	Underreporting	Overreporting
<b>Information processing<sup>2</sup></b>	Attention away from threat	Maintaining attention on the source of threat
<b>Mis/match with developmental milestone<sup>3</sup></b>	Autonomy (match)	Poor autonomy ( <i>mismatch</i> )

<sup>1</sup>Fortuna & Roisman, 2008 ; Howard et al., 2017 <sup>2</sup>Based on Williams, 1997; Fox et al., 2001, 2002 <sup>3</sup>Based on Dagan & Bernard, under review

# DISCUSSION

## QUESTION 3

**Are Unresolved adults likely to be more anxious than resolved adults?**

➤ Yes

➤ Cohen's  $d = 0.27$ , 95% CI [0.14, 0.39]

➤ Change in Unresolved status alone may be meaningful enough to reduce anxiety symptoms

# THANK YOU!

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Pianta, Egeland, & Adam, 1996  
Fortuna, Roisman, Haydon, Groh, & Holland (OLD SIB), 2011  
Fortuna, Roisman, Haydon, Groh, & Holland (YOUNG SIB), 2011

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# Early Versus Late Internalizing sx's: An Integrative View

	Dominant Support Figures	Developmental Achievement	Hyperactivating Strategies	Deactivating Strategies
Childhood	Parents	<b>Trust</b> <b>Secure</b>	Support Soliciting	<b>Poor Support Soliciting</b>
Post-Childhood	Non-Parental Figures	<b>Autonomy</b>	<b>Poor Autonomy</b>	(Excessive) Autonomy

# RESULTS

## MODERATORS

		<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>d</i>	95% CI	<i>Q</i>	<i>p</i>
<b><i>SECURE VS. INSECURE</i></b>							
<b>Year of Publication</b>		35	3762	-0.02*	[-0.03, -0.01]	6.61	<.05
<b>Ethnicity (% White)</b>		26	3301	0.01*	[0.00, 0.01]	4.15	<.05

\* $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$