

## **ADOLESCENT PERSONALITY DISORDERS AND CONFLICT WITH ROMANTIC PARTNERS DURING THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD**

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Longitudinal data were used to investigate the association of adolescent personality disorders with conflict between romantic partners during the transition to adulthood (i.e., age 17 to 27). Findings indicated that adolescent personality disorders (PDs) assessed at mean age 16 were associated with subsequent elevated partner conflict. Cluster B PD was associated with sustained elevations in partner conflict throughout the transition to adulthood. Cluster A and C PDs were associated with elevated partner conflict before age 23. Paranoid, schizoid, schizotypal, borderline, narcissistic, and obsessive-compulsive PD symptoms were independently associated with sustained elevations in partner conflict.

More than anything else, personality disorders (PDs) are characterized by marked disturbances in close interpersonal relationships. Among other maladaptive interpersonal behaviors, DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) specifies unstable relationships, exploitative and abusive behavior, passive-aggressive behavior, excessive dependency, and pathologically avoidant behavior as symptoms of PDs. In fact, 45% of the DSM-IV criteria for diagnosing Axis II disorders identify dysfunctional interpersonal behaviors as symptoms of PD, far more than the remaining criteria devoted to maladaptive cognition (23%), affective disturbances (20%), or other behaviors (12%) (Pilkonis, 2002). Not surprisingly, adults with PDs commonly have elevated rates of marital conflict and partner violence (Craig, 2003; Gondolf & White, 2001; Holtzworth-Monroe & Stuart, 1994). Parents with PDs have serious interpersonal conflicts with children that may manifest in verbal, emotional, or physical abuse (Johnson, Cohen, Kasen, Smailes, & Brook, 2001; Kaufman et al., 1998). Disturbances between parents and children and between romantic partners are important to

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