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Longitudinal Relationships between Early Adolescent Family Functioning and Youth Adjustment: An Examination of the Moderating Role of Very Low Birth Weight

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▶ Abstract

Objective To examine longitudinal relations between early adolescent family conflict and late adolescent psychosocial adjustment, and the moderating role of low birth weight. **Methods** Three groups of adolescents (48 with birth weight <750 g, 46 with birth weight 750–1499 g, and 51 term-born controls) and their parents completed ratings of family conflict at age 11 (Time 1). Parent, teacher, and youth reports of psychosocial functioning were obtained at ages 11 and 17 (Time 2). **Results** Birth weight moderated the relationship between Time 1 adolescent-perceived conflict and change in adolescent behavioral functioning. For adolescents with histories of <750 g birth weight, adolescent-perceived conflict predicted less adaptive changes in teacher-reported total behavior problems and externalizing


problems. **Conclusions** Small disruptions to the parent–child relationship have negative implications for the later well-being of adolescents with extreme levels of low birth weight. Clinical attention to resolving early adolescent conflict may promote adaptive adjustment.

Key words: adolescence; low birth weight; perceived conflict; psychological adjustment.

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