

EXAMINING THE COMORBIDITY OF
BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER
AND POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Emily M. Scheiderer

Timothy J. Trull, PhD, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), both relatively prevalent disorders in our society, overlap and/or co-occur in ways that are not yet well understood, especially outside of clinical samples. Despite methodological and sampling differences among existing studies, ample evidence exists to suggest that this comorbidity is frequent and presents a variety of difficulties for the individual, the clinician, and the researcher. This comorbidity also raises many questions, most of which remain unanswered. The present study aimed to address some of these questions in a large, community sample. In particular, the question of the importance of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) as a potential etiological factor and predictor of general functioning was addressed, along with other important factors, such as gender and age. CSA has been a focus of prior clinical studies and theoretical literature, but empirical evidence to generalize this focus to the broader population has been lacking. Results from the present study suggest that, in the general population: this comorbidity is more deleterious than either BPD or PTSD alone; CSA should continue to be considered an important factor; and the factors of gender, age, and CSA exhibit interactions and main effects in the prediction of this comorbidity and its associated decrements in health-related functioning, calling for continued research as well as attention to these factors in the treatment context.