THE CO-OCCURRENCE OF ATYPICAL GENDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND AUTISM SPECTRUM TRAITS: A PILOT STUDY IN A NON-CLINICAL GROUP

Caldarera Angela (1), Bergaglia Maurizio (1), Brustia Piera (1)

(1) Department of Psychology, University of Torino, Italy

Gender identity is currently viewed as a way of perceiving oneself across the so-called *gender spectrum*: actually gender variance (GV) occurs in non clinical groups of children and adolescents (de Vries, Kreukels, Steensma, & McGuire, 2014). At the same time, many studies showed a higher prevalence of autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) in youth referred to gender clinics, compared to general population (Van Der Miesen, Hurley, & De Vries, 2016). Researchers developed different hypotheses about the nature of such association, and one of the most studied is related to Baron Cohen's Empathizing-Systemizing Model (EQ/SQ, Baron-Cohen et al., 1997). Making available data about this association also in non-clinical populations would help to better understand the co-occurrence of these conditions. The aim of this pilot study is to look at the association between GV, levels of EQ/SQ, and autistic traits in a non clinical group of children. The parents of 87 children aged 4-11 filled out, upon informed consent, a set of parent-report questionnaires including: a general information form; the Italian versions of the *Gender Identity Questionnaire for Children* (GIQC, Johnson et al., 2004), of the EQ/SQ Quotient and of the Autism Spectrum Quotient (AQ). We tested the association between variables and differences between groups through multivariate statistics. Higher levels of stereotypical masculine behavior were associated with lower levels of empathy, and gender atypical behavior was positively correlated with the AQ levels. Interestingly, such traits were positively correlated with cross-gender identification as well, and, when running the analyses separately on the two

subgroups of birth-assigned females and males, only the association was significant only in the birth-assigned females group. Results indicate the necessity of further exploring this association in a bigger group, looking at differences as a function of age and gender.

ADULT ATTACHMENT AND REFLECTIVE FUNCTION IN TRANS ADULTS PRE- AND POST- SEX REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Di Fini Giulia (1), Finzi Sarah (1), Civilotti Cristina (1), Molo Mariateresa (2), Veglia Fabio (1)

(1) Department of Psychology, University of Turin
(2) Fondazione Carlo Molo Onlus

The quality of attachment relationships experienced in early childhood has important consequences on the development of Reflective Functioning -RF (Fonagy & Target, 2001). This ability is connected to the representation of the self and depends on the caregiver's capacity to mirror the child's mental experiences. In Gender Dysphoria (GD) a prevalence of *insecure* states of mind was found (Vitelli & Riccardi, 2010). Moreover, the exposure to a repeated caregiver's failure of mentalizing the child's sense of body incongruity can be hypothesized (Fonagy, 2006; Lemma, 2013). Although attachment Internal Working Models (IWMs) are found to be relatively stable over time, some studies have showed changes following significant life events. In this exploratory study we aimed to examine if and how gender transition process influences the continuity of the IWMs and RF level. Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) was administrated to 20 adults with GD referred to C.I.D.I.Ge.M. of Turin pre- (T0) and post- sex reassignment surgery (T1). RF was coded according to the RF Scale from AAI transcripts. Data at T0 showed a high percentage of insecure attachment with frequent signs of unresolved loss or trauma. An