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Am I Angry or Hungry? Emotion Dysregulation Routes On the Onset of Overweight in Childhood.

G. De Campora¹, L. Giromini², **V. Guerriero**¹, C. Hadjeasgari³, M. Khademi³, G.C. Zavattini¹

¹Department of Dynamic and Clinical Psychology, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy ; ²Department of Psychology, University of Turin, Turin, Italy ; ³Department of Psychology, Alliant International University, San Diego, Italy

Introduction. A growing body of research has indicated that difficulties in emotion regulation (ER) are associated to eating disorders as well as to weight changes. However, it has not been clearly investigated the intergenerational transmission of ER and its role on the onset of early feeding and weight problems of the child.

Aim. The goals of the present study are: 1) to examine the relationship between maternal ER during pregnancy and the feeding practices at 8 months of the baby; 2) and to assess the predictive role of ER on the onset of overweight at 3 years of age.

Method. The sample is made up by 65 dyads distributed to 2 different groups based on their BMI. During pregnancy they were administered DERS. 8 months after the delivery they were videotaped during the meal time with baby through the Feeding Observational Scale (Ammaniti et al., 2002). Weight outcome of the baby was reported by the mother at 3 years of age.

Results. Findings has shown that overweight mothers emerged as more emotional dysregulated during pregnancy. Their feeding interaction with the baby was also featured by greater difficulties compared to the control group. ER during pregnancy was able to predict the affective state of the dyad and the interactional conflict during the mealtime at 8 months. The affective state of the dyad at 8 months predicted the weight gain of the baby at 3.

Conclusion. The maternal and the dyadic emotional functioning play a key role in shaping the risk for childhood obesity.