

Scientific Final Report

Personality development during adolescence: reliability and validation of the Interview of Personality Organization Processes in Adolescence (IPOP-A)

1. Original goals of the research study

The original goals of the research study deals with the development of the *Interview of Personality Organization Processes in Adolescence* (IPOP-A; Ammaniti, Fontana, Kernberg, Clarkin & Clarkin, 2011) as a reliable and valid measure to assess personality organization during adolescence useful for psychoanalytic sounded diagnosis and for the evaluation of psychoanalytic treatment outcome. The objective of this research project was to validate the final version of the IPOP-A assessing (1) its reliability and (2) its validity. Starting from the groundbreaking work made by our colleagues on the Structured Interview of Personality Organization (STIPO; Clarkin, Caligor, Stern, Kernberg, 2003; Horz, Stern, Caligor, Critchfield, Kernberg, Mertens, Clarkin, 2009; Stern, Caligor, Clarkin, Critchfield, Horz, MacCornack, Lenzenweger, Kernberg, 2010) we deeply modify the STIPO interview after (1) a conceptual research on the main psychoanalytic issues in adolescence development (Laufer, Laufer, 1984; Erikson, 1956; Blos, 1967; Blos, 1968); (2) a clinical use of the interview; (3) empirical research and data analysis (Fontana, Ammaniti, 2010). Throughout this process we changed, added and dropped items from the previous STIPO version, refining the language to better suite adolescents experience and changing the scoring system to catch adolescents complexity and contradictions. IPOP-A investigates three main domains related to Otto and Paulina Kernberg object relation theory (P. Kernberg, Weiner & Bardenstein, 2000; Foelsch, Odom & Kernberg, 2008) and psychoanalytic oriented research on affect development in adolescence (Hauser, Schmitd, 1991; Hauser, Safyer, 1994; Fonagy, Gergerly, Jurist, Target, 2002).

This research could offer to psychoanalytic oriented researchers a new validated tool, the IPOP-A, specific to adolescents and useful in (1) the diagnostic field of adolescent personality disorders; (2) the assessment of personality developmental pathways in adolescence (with longitudinal study); (3) the study of psychoanalytic treatments and psychoanalytic psychotherapies with severely disturbed adolescents in a multiwave study that consider symptomatology, personality organization and socio-emotional impairment.

2. Outcomes of the study and future plans

IPOP-A reliability was tested calculating ICC coefficients for inter-rater reliability and Cronbach's alpha for internal coherence of each IPOP-A's domain. Inter-rater reliability between 12 clinicians trained on IPOP-A interview is very good ranging from .86 (for IPOP-A identity domain) to .83 (for IPOP-A quality of object relations domain). On the basis of the goals outlined above, we recruited 80 adolescents in two contexts: (1) clinical outpatients departments from all over the country specialized in the treatment of adolescents psychopathology (N=40); (2) school setting for non-referred adolescents (N=40). Cronbach's alpha index calculated on the overall sample (N=80) were also good ranging from .81 to .84 for all IPOP-A domains (i.e., identity, quality of object relations, affect regulation and risky behaviors).

The convergent validity between IPOP-A and related tools like Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI; Millon, Davies, Millon, 1993) and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scales (DERS; Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Weinberg, Klonsky, 2009) is good since: (1) high levels of identity diffusion measured by the IPOP-A were related to high scores on MACI personality pattern scales; (2) poor quality of object relations assessed by the IPOP-A were related to high scores on peculiar MACI scales (like difficulties with peers

etc.); (3) high levels of affect dysregulation were related to emotion regulation difficulties as indicated by DERS scales. The discriminant validity of IPOP-A interview was assessed comparing a clinical group and a control group of adolescents: adolescents in treatment scores higher on all IPOP-A scales than nonreferred adolescents. In the future, we will collect a larger data sample to perform factorial analysis to test IPOP-A's construct validity and we will promote a larger clinical and research use of the interview. In conclusion, we would like to outline that IPOP-A interview is a psychoanalytical inspired tool useful for the clinical assessment of adolescents in order to evidence the conflictual areas as well the resources of personality. At the same time, the interview can be used also to evaluate the changes during psychoanalytic treatment with adolescents.

3. List the publications resulting from the study

1. Ammaniti M., Fontana A., Clarkin A., Clarkin J., Nicolais G., Kernberg O. (2012), Assessment of Adolescent Personality Disorders Through the Interview of Personality Organization Processes in Adolescence (IPOP-A): Clinical and Theoretical Implications. *Adolescent Psychiatry*, 2(1), 116-128.
2. Ammaniti, M., Fontana, A., Di Marco, G. (2012). La valutazione dei processi di strutturazione della personalità in adolescenza: l'intervista IPOP-A [*The assessment of personality organization processes in adolescence: the IPOP-A interview*]. In Madeddu, F., Preti, E. (a cura di). *La diagnosi strutturale di personalità secondo il modello di Kernberg [Personality Structured Assessment in Kernberg's theory]*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore
3. Ammaniti, M., Fontana, A. (2012). Il corpo nella personalità dell'adolescente: l'uso della IPOP-A [*Body image and adolescent personality organization*]. IREP International Congress "Body and Psychopathology". Rome, 24-26 February 2012.
4. Fontana, A. (2012). Personality organization development during adolescence: validating ipop-a to assess different adolescents' pathways. Presented to IPA 18th Annual Research Training Program. Berlin, 2nd-10th August 2012

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