

Tuesday late afternoon session Track B, Tuesday, Sep 23 2025, 16:00-17:45

Location: Seminar 1

Session: Power Dynamics

Chair: Jasna Podreka

OR-31

Learning from psychiatry: A scripted expert interview about personality traits (narcissism, perfectionism...) and lessons for researcher assessment

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It is often the talk of the academic town: the abusive behaviour of certain academic leaders, how they treat their subordinates, how they abuse their power and make decisions at costs of others and how they sometimes engage in questionable research practices. Interestingly, often these behaviours continue to exist, there is a fear to speak up because of potential repercussions, there are careers at stake and mostly early career researchers do not feel confident to discuss these issues. Many see personality as a crucial element in this. If we look at the evidence, some personality traits seem to be associated with higher ranks in academia, and one with self-reported misconduct. What are these character traits? How might they influence research quality or risk of cutting corners? Can we quantify their effect on work culture, like power abuse risks? Are these features (or behaviour patterns) shaped, because the science system moulds scientists to learn or develop them? Or are researchers with these character traits merely selected? How can research assessment policies take these findings into account, for the good of science?

Research data on this topic are scarce, but not absent.[1, 2] What we can know with high certainty is surpassed by the multitude of probable hypotheses experts may have on this topic. These perspectives may be valuable, (i) for coping with certain behaviours and personalities in the lab, and (ii) for the policies in research, especially in hiring, in assessment but certainly also in how we can teach early career researchers to empower themselves and step/speak up against these behaviours.

This duo presentation is planned as a semi-scripted interview by an interviewer (Bert Seghers) with an expert (Joeri Tjink, who combines a degree and experience as a practicing psychiatrist, with a research interest in research integrity). Combining evidence with experience, we navigate answers to the abovementioned questions. And we unravel why we don't hear enough the stories of all those excellent leaders with responsible behaviours!

[1] Tjink JK, Bouter LM, Veldkamp CLS, van de Ven PM, Wicherts JM, Smulders YM (2016) Personality Traits Are Associated with Research Misbehavior in Dutch Scientists: A Cross-Sectional Study. PLoS ONE 11(9): e0163251. doi:10.1371/ journal.pone.0163251

[2] Tjink JK, Smulders YM, Bouter LM (2017) Publiphilia Impactfactorius: a new psychiatric syndrome among biomedical scientists? PeerJ Preprints 5:e3347v1 <https://doi.org/10.7287/peerj.preprints.3347v1>