

ESSPD Academy Newsletter, July 2023

Dear colleagues and friends, dear members of the ESSPD,

One of the most noble tasks ESSPD members and friends engage in as core mission of the ESSPD is the teaching of methods skills of the next generation of researchers in Europe. In August 2023, already for its third edition, ESSPD welcomes 20 early career researchers to Crêt-Bérard, Switzerland - a haven of peace and inspiration amidst nature - to study methods in developmental psychopathology and intervention science, focused on personality disorders. Thanks to the Swiss National Science Foundation who has supported this meeting again with a grant, ESSPD is able to offer competitive stipends to seven early career researchers affiliated with Eastern European Universities. In the current newsletter, several of the teachers expected in Crêt-Bérard will inform in prime-time about their teaching topics.



Ueli Kramer

ESSPD has initiated a new webinar series this spring and we are very happy about the turnout. Three of these webinars – one on early interventions in BPD, one on skills mothers with borderline personality disorders may need and a third on current perspectives on pathological narcissism – have been commented on by colleagues, as you will discover in the current newsletter. After the summer break, ESSPD will engage with another series of webinars. Have a look at our [website](#)! The next webinar will be on November 13th, 2023 at 5:30pm CET on psychobiological changes in psychotherapy for personality disorders, given by two experts in the field, Sabine Herpertz and Katja Bertsch. Another webinar is scheduled for December on dissemination of evidence-based practice and another one for January 2024 on interpersonal models in personality disorders. I hope you will be able to join our online activities!

Mark in your calendars: The upcoming ESSPD General Membership Meeting will take place on October 10th, 2023, at 7pm (1 hour, online). This will be the occasion to meet with the ESSPD board and to get first-hand information about new developments within the ESSPD and to contribute as member of the society. We will send an invitation to all ESSPD members early September.

2024 will be the year for us as a community of personality disorders researchers and clinician to reconvene again, after so many years of online activities. In September 2024, as announced this spring, the ESSPD will host its 7th conference, in Antwerp, on the topic “Treating Personality Pathology in a Time of Change”. I am personally thrilled to [announce](#) the confirmed speakers of this conference. Also, the Scientific Committee will communicate in the fall on important dates, but I can already inform you that the submission portal for Antwerp 2024 will open on December 1st, 2023. Get your Abstracts ready!

Please enjoy your summer, and we are looking forward to be in contact with you soon!

Ueli Kramer
President of the ESSPD

Early intervention and prevention focusing on social factors. The roles of parenting with a focus on emotion regulation and the youth welfare system.

Babette Renneberg



**Babette
Renneberg**

Current etiological models of BPD are based on a developmental psychopathological approach in which multiple factors are considered. In addition to genetic and neural factors as well as stressful life events, the importance of the family and social environment are emphasized. Thus, social variables play a key role in the etiology of PD. In particular, the parent-child relationship represents a significant context for the development of BPD (Steele, Townsend & Grenyer, 2019). In one part of the session, the role of emotion regulation in the transmission will be highlighted. With a focus on Borderline Personality Disorder, a model for the familial transmission of pathology will be presented and discussed.

Since parents with BPD face multiple challenges when raising their kids, one way to prevent transmission of pathology is to support parents in parenting and to reduce their stress attached. The aim is to promote mental health in the offspring. A study design of an RCT to examine the outcome of a group parenting training program for mothers with BPD will be presented.

In addition to psychotherapy and psychiatric treatment, the families are often supported by the youth welfare system. Insights into the role the youth welfare system plays in these families will also be presented and discussed.

Reflective Functioning as process measure to assess changes in mental flexibility during psychotherapy

Svenja Taubner



**Svenja
Taubner**

Conclusions from longitudinal research in developmental psychopathology and large clinical samples established the idea of a general p-factor in psychopathology, meaning that instead of focusing on distinct categorical sets of mental disorders, we can model mental problems on a shared continuum of severity. Fonagy et al. suggested that psychopathology can be conceptualized by the degree of absence of resilience, drawing our attention away from symptoms towards protective resources and mental capabilities or skills that evolve during childhood and adolescence. To facilitate resilience as a new goal in psychotherapy means to also shift therapeutic goals from adjustment to a certain cultural norm or definition of mental health to a more open way of creating mental flexibility in individuals. Such flexibility is conditional not only for adaptation in adult role function but also in the pursuit of wellbeing and meaning, bearing in mind constantly changing socio-political circumstances and contexts. As such, mental (or cognitive) flexibility has particular relevance for personality pathology which is characterized by rigid and maladaptive patterns of relating to self-and others and an inability to flexibly respond to the stochastic nature of interactions and relationships.

In this workshop, the Reflective Functioning Scale is presented as a well introduced reliable tool for the assessment of mental flexibility when thinking about one' own attachment history or when interacting with a therapist during sessions. The coding procedure will be demonstrated using video material and transcripts of therapy sessions. Differences between trait and state variables will be discussed.

Interpersonal functioning and Social Cognition in PD

Chiara de Panfils



Chiara de Panfils

Personality pathology often emerges in adolescence, and longitudinal research demonstrated that symptoms of personality disorders (PD) are more severe during adolescence. Consistently, PD are currently understood as developmental disorders with an adolescent onset, with no point of rarity at the transition into adulthood. Therefore, it is important to clarify the mechanisms underlying the emergence of personality dysfunction in adolescence. The definition of PD proposed by the Alternative Model for PD (AMDP) included in the DSM-5, Section III, provides a better foundation for these research efforts than the categorical classification proposed in Section II. The AMDP explicitly acknowledges that healthy and disordered personality exist on a continuum along a general dimension of self and interpersonal functioning. While successful functioning in these areas represent a key feature of healthy personality, impairments indicate a PD diagnosis. This definition has important research implications. Research on the processes that drive successful interpersonal functioning can help to understand the origins of personality pathology, and studies on PD can yield insights into healthy adjustment. Can deviations in the developmental trajectory or in the response of social evaluation processes contribute to the enduring difficulties of interpersonal functioning that characterize PD? The module of the Summer School on “Interpersonal functioning and Social Cognition in PD” will focus on how variations in the typical adolescent interpersonal functioning – and related social-cognitive styles - can contribute to the emergence of PD. Indeed, a unique and defining feature of adolescence is the newfound importance of interpersonal relationships and social life. This marked motivation toward social relatedness has been called “social sensitivity” and is thought to intensify the attention toward processing information concerning social evaluation. This has important consequences for psychosocial adjustment. For instance, as compared to other ages, adolescents are more emotionally reactive to both social exclusion, which causes them to experience intense anxiety, and social acceptance, which is associated with mood elevation. They also exhibit less recruitment of brain regulatory circuitries when processing the emotional qualities of social feedback. Furthermore, adolescents show a heightened tendency to speculate about the thoughts and feelings of others and exhibit an increased connectivity between brain regions involved in social cognition and theory of mind when asked to reason about social scenarios. These few examples suggest that adolescents, as compared to adults, display heightened sensitivity to social evaluation at various levels. Notably, this increased social sensitivity exhibited during experimental tasks correlates with reduced satisfaction with real-life relationships. This module of the Summer School aims to encourage further research in this field, with the goal of refining our understanding of the social cognitive mechanisms underlying social dysfunction in PD, thereby identifying potential targets for prevention and early treatment.

Assessing Change in Psychotherapy: beyond outcome

Ueli Kramer

When researchers engage in psychotherapy research, they generally start by demonstrating that symptom decrease has occurred in a given treatment (outcome research). They may also be interested to learn about the patient profile associated with the best treatment response (predictor or moderator research). The present workshop will focus on assessing change beyond outcome, by focusing on assessing principles, processes and mechanisms of change. These are generally understood from a psychotherapy-integrative viewpoint (Castonguay et al., 2006, 2019) as changing variables explaining outcome. While self-report measures may be used in the assessment, they may fall short of the complexity and depth of the variables of interest. The workshop will illustrate with novel research designs assessing changes within sessions from an event-based perspective, outside of session using longitudinal designs, and discusses the integration with biological markers of change. Content examples will be given on assessment of emotional understanding and awareness, coping with distress and internal conflictuality in adolescents and adults with borderline personality disorder, which will serve as basis for exercises and practice in the workshop.



Ueli Kramer

Webinar Report: New pathways to improve early detection and intervention in borderline personality disorder

Report by Mariana Mendoza Alvarez

*Michael Kaess, Chair and Director University Hospital of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Bern
Zoom | Monday, January 16, 2023 | 17:30–19:00 CET*



**Michael
Kaess, Switzerland**

The ESSPD hosted his second 2023 webinar with Professor Kaess, chair and director at the University Hospital of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Bern, as panellist. This webinar was an enriching experience as it provided ground-breaking information regarding pathways for early detection of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and its advantages.

Personalised treatment and stepped care in adolescents were discussed in connection to avant-garde interventions being currently conducted, such as AtR!Sk. The webinar closed with forward thinking results regarding potential biomarkers for emotional regulation and its relevance to interventions and e-mental health.

A highly comprehensive overview of the state-of-the-art regarding early detection and intervention in BPD was provided. Mental health and psychosocial functioning of the affected individuals were potentially pointed to be remarkably improved by early detection and intervention. Empirical data was shared pointing to the current validity of BPD as an acknowledged reliable and valid diagnosis for adolescents and the diagnostic differences on a dimensional levels in terms of comorbidity between self-harming adolescents with and without BPD disorder.

Thought-provoking findings were presented regarding potential challenges resulting from conceptualising BPD using ICD-11 criteria, Results showed that we could be at risk of missing one group who would not fulfil criteria according to ICD-11 but who might well benefit from treatment. Professor Kaess ended his webinar with some ‘food for thought’ regarding novel biomarker interventions such as using vagus nerve stimulation to treat adolescent depression and the “AT_HOME” intervention as a replacement of inpatient treatment of children with an adolescent with severe mental health problems. The information shared in this webinar is sure not to be missed by people interested in new pathways to detect and address BPD complaints in children and adolescents.

Webinar Report: Parental and mother-child interaction in the context of borderline personality disorder

Report by Luca Egervári

Babette Renneberg, Director of the Outpatient Psychotherapy Treatment Centre at Freie Universität Berlin and Charlotte Rosenbach, Doctor of Psychology, FUB · Institute of Psychology Zoom | Thursday, March 16, 2023 | 17:00–18:30 CET



Babette Renneberg, Germany

The ESSPD hosted its latest webinar on parental and mother-child interaction in the context of borderline personality disorder (BPD), which was prepared by Babette Renneberg and Charlotte Rosenbach, eventually held by Charlotte Rosenbach, Doctor of Psychology at Freie Universität Berlin, Institute of Psychology. The webinar is addressing a topic that is rarely spoken of, namely, the parenting difficulties of mothers with BPD, and is offering a whole structured training program as solution.



Charlotte Rosenbach, Germany

Firstly, the webinar gives an overview on how each BPD symptom contributes to and manifests in parenting difficulties – for example mothers with BPD are often unable to recognize and/or respond to their children’s needs, are inconsistent in their parenting styles and have difficulties in setting adequate limits. As a result, children of mothers with BPD are often at high risk to develop dysfunctional behaviour patterns themselves. So, treating mothers with BPD is of especially high importance, as it may have double impact.

The second part of the webinar focuses on the “Parenting Training for Mothers with BPD”, which is an outpatient training program developed by the authors, currently running and accessible at Freie Universität Berlin. The goal of the training is to break the intergenerational transmission of neglect and violence. The webinar introduces the manualized Parenting Skills Group, walks through its sessions and topics, and gives a valuable insight into its therapeutical techniques. The explanation of the therapeutic strategies of the training is supported by video examples and short role plays. As an immense gain, the Parenting Skills Group manual book was shared and made available during the webinar. The effectiveness studies of the training program are currently in progress.

This innovative and motivating webinar is not to be missed by anyone involved in the treatment or research of borderline personality disorder, and I express my highest hopes that this training program will be implemented broadly across countries.

Webinar Report: Advances in the understanding and treatment of pathological narcissism

Report by Lilla Gerlinger

Presenters: Elsa Ronningstam, PhD; Eve Caligor, PhD; David Kealey, PhD; Nicholas Day, PhD

Moderator: Ueli Kramer, PhD

Zoom | Wednesday, May 31, 2023 | 17:00–18:30 CET

The European Society for the Study of Personality Disorders hosted its webinar on May 31st with the title Advances in the understanding and treatment of pathological narcissism with Elsa Ronningstam, PhD, Eve Caligor, PhD, David Kealy, PhD, Nicholas Day, PhD, Ueli Kramer, PhD.

The webinar focuses on clinical and therapeutic aspects of pathological narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder, a disorder (unlike Borderline Personality Disorder) no formal randomized controlled trials particularly focused on despite all the clinical theoretical advances and excessive research conducted on the topic in recent years. Four presentations address various aspects of the complexity of narcissistic personality functioning, beginning with the advantages of a dimensional approach to diagnosis for NPD and the changes in the diagnostic view of empathy in pathological narcissism over the past years. Instead of *inability* to recognise and identify with the feelings and needs of others (DSM III) or the *unwillingness* to do so (DSM IV-R) empathy in NPD is considered as an *impaired ability*, which also aligns with the neuropsychological empirical studies that suggest evidence for compromised empathetic functioning.

It is suggested in the second presentation about the challenges of clinical strategies in treatment of narcissistic pathology, that in the absence of evidence-based treatment protocol for NPD, we can borrow strategies developed for treatment of personality disorders from DBT, SFT, TFP...etc. While making the diagnosis it is important to be mindful of the wide representations of narcissistic pathology and assess for it especially with patients presenting with substance misuse, affective disorders, anxiety, interpersonal-, and/or work-related problems. General evidence based clinical strategies for treatment of personality pathology include the frank discussion of diagnosis with the patient along with psychoeducation regarding personality functioning, problems with self-esteem maintenance, affective fluctuations and pervasive self criticism...etc. and advises an explicitly clear and detailed establishment of treatment goals and framework of therapy.

The third presentation focuses on the integration of research findings regarding the full scope of narcissistic functioning from grandiose to vulnerable that can contribute to case formulation. Narcissistic personality functioning is shaped by adverse developmental and social experiences and characterized by distorted internal representations of self and others in which vulnerability is a main driver of distress and impairment, hence suggesting that grandiosity may be an essential compensatory mechanism in many cases.

Social dynamics, conflictual patterns and interpersonal dimension of narcissism are addressed in the last section through case examples of interpersonal experiences, emphasizing that grandiosity and vulnerability more than often co-occur. Important assets



Elsa Ronningstam, USA, Associate Professor of Psychology, Harvard Medical School



Eve Caligor, USA, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Director of Psychotherapy Division Training



David Kealey, Canada, Institute of Mental Health Canada



Nicholas Day, Australia, Research Fellow, School of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities



Ueli Kramer, Switzerland, Department of Psychiatry, University of Lausanne

Webinar Report: Advances in the understanding and treatment of pathological narcissism (continued)

of the presentation are the advice on clinical implications of treating a partner or family member of -, or an individual with pathological narcissism and also advice to the clinician on managing countertransference reactions - with the key message being not to act on one's own feelings, rather to observe them with curiosity in order to see why the patient *needs to evoke* these feelings in others and for us as clinicians to contain them.

The webinar presents a broad overview on current knowledge, research and clinical practice regarding pathological narcissism. It offers a useful theoretical framework, as well as essential practical advice for professionals involved in the research or treatment of patients with narcissistic pathology or their family members.



Svenja Taubner,
ESSPD
Newsletter Editor



Matilde Elices,
ESSPD Editorial Board



Michaela Swales,
ESSPD Editorial Board

ESSPD Academy Newsletter Submissions

Submissions to the *ESSPD Academy Newsletter* are accepted on an ongoing basis. Subject areas may include issues from clinical practice, views and comments on current development within PD, reports from affiliated societies, member information, national and international events and conferences, research updates on personality disorders and more. We are interested in submissions from practitioners and researchers from within and outside of Europe. The length of submissions should be from 300-800 words and formatted in Word. We suggest that the authors limit their use of references. Please enclose author photos with the text.

The Newsletter Editor is Svenja Taubner. Submissions should be emailed to at: svenja.taubner@med.uni-heidelberg.de

The corresponding scientific writer is Sophie Liljedahl, Ph. D.,
Email: dr.s.liljedahl@gmail.com

Membership Nomination Form

Nominee's name:		
Title:		
Affiliation:		
Email:	City:	Country:

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND (psychiatrist, psychologist, nurse, social worker, other):

NOMINATION CATEGORY (*mark with X*)

Researcher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clinician	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, specify	<input type="checkbox"/>
------------	--------------------------	-----------	--------------------------	---------	--------------------------	----------------	--------------------------

MAIN FIELD(S) OF INTEREST (NEUROSCIENCES, ASSESSMENT, TREATMENT, PREVENTION, OTHER)

ACHIEVEMENTS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, INNOVATIONS, DISCOVERIES (*list 3 most important*)

-
-
-

PUBLICATIONS (*list 3 most important last 5 years*)

-
-
-

HONORS, AWARDS (*list 3 most important*)

-
-
-

leadership roles (*list 3 most important current or past roles*)

-
-
-

What you believe nominee will be able to contribute to the ESSPD

-
-
-

Names of two nominators (printed letters):	Signatures of two nominators:
Place	Date