

# Popular Dutch psychologist Diederik Stapel found to be a fraud

November 2 2011, by Bob Yirka

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(Medical Xpress) -- Diederik Stapel, the Dutch social psychologist who has made news on a rather regular basis over the last several years, and who had even become popular on some television chat shows, has been found to be a complete fraud, making up data, rather than conducting field trials as he claimed. In his so-called studies of social phenomena, he's made claims suggesting for example that eating meat makes people more aggressive, or that scientists working in messy labs tend to discriminate more.

A preliminary report published [on Tilburg University website](#) (in Dutch) describes how he and his work are now under investigation by all three

of the universities that have employed him over the length of his career and how his own thesis is now under review as well. Also, sadly, many students that had Stapel as a supervisor now face questions about the work on their theses as well.

Tilburg University, Stapel's current employer has suspended him pending the outcome of the still ongoing investigation. Pim Levelt, chair of the committee that is conducting the investigation has said that 30 papers thus far have been shown to be based on falsified data. At this point approximately 150 papers are being looked at, many more of which are suspected to be based on fictional data.

Thus far, it appears that Stapel was simply averse to carrying out actual field studies, choosing instead to simply create data in his head that he felt would support what he was trying to show. On student projects, he would simply go away for a time, then come back with data that he claimed had been obtained through field studies conducted by some other source. Shockingly, some students have reported that they never once had to conduct a field study to pass his courses.

Stapel has issued a statement where he says he is both sorry and embarrassed by what he's done, though some might wonder if there is any point in listening to anything that is being said by someone who has made a career out of lying to the public about social behavior. Indeed, one of his "studies" that may or may not have been based on actual data, reportedly showed, via the way some psychologists reacted to a plagiarism scandal, how people in positions of power can have their moral compass go askew. Stapel's fraudulent behavior came to light when some of his research assistants suspected something was amiss and went to college authorities who opened the investigation that led to other findings of [fraud](#).

Stapel, who is still just forty six years old, may also be prosecuted for

misappropriation of university funds and for harming the reputations of colleagues and students. Also, obviously, his career is over, and he may even wind up losing his own degree. Many are likely to scratch their heads wondering what he was thinking, and indeed, Stapel himself will probably be doing a lot of that himself as he ponders his actions for the rest of his life.

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