

Speech on the presentation of the '*Flawed Science*' report

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Please allow me to begin by expressing my gratitude to the members of the Committees of Enquiry. They have done an extraordinary amount of work to get to the bottom of the Stapel case, which means they have done a great service to science. For, however uncomfortable the truth may be, we as scientists are obligated to uncover the truth and discover exactly what happened in this case of academic fraud.

I would like to say a special word of thanks to Professor Pim Levelt, chairman of the Tilburg Committee and also of the Coordinating Committee. When I asked him to lead this investigation, neither of us could have imagined how extensive, intensive and laborious it would be. I am grateful that he agreed to take on this monumental task and see it through to the end. I am well aware that, in one sense, the work was not very rewarding. Nevertheless, it is very important for the whole of the scientific community that this case was investigated thoroughly and openly. A laudable achievement! I would also like to thank my colleague Rectors of the University of Groningen and the University of Amsterdam for the joint effort.

The result of the investigation into Stapel's work is shocking. We knew of course from the interim report and the publication of the interim findings on the website that much was amiss. The final report

lists a total of 55 fraudulent publications. Moreover, there are a further seven publications from Stapel's time in Amsterdam with strong indications of fraud, going back to 1996. This means that these fraudulent practices went on for 15 years, which is simply astonishing.

The most pressing question is of course: how can a researcher get away with manipulating and fabricating data for 15 years without getting caught? And not just any researcher, but a man who managed to build up a solid reputation in those 15 years in the world of social psychology, both in the Netherlands and abroad. The *Flawed Science* report lays bare everything that went wrong and why review and criticism, the very foundations of good science, failed in this case.

There are lessons to be learned at all levels that will make this kind of academic misconduct practically impossible in the future. In its interim report, the Levelt Committee presented a number of recommendations, and it has now added several more.

I can say that we are taking these recommendations very seriously and that we will be implementing them in addition to measures that we have already taken. Obviously, we have opted for a proactive stance over the course of the past year. Our regulation on scientific integrity has now been amended (in line with the VSNU model), Professor Emeritus Cyrille Fijnaut was appointed to the post of Confidential Counselor on January 1, 2012, and a Committee on Scientific Integrity has been established.

PhD students now have at least two supervisors, in accordance with a decision by the Doctorate Board.

The Dean of the Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences has instituted numerous measures regarding the handling of data and has emphasized the value of replication as a tool of scientific endeavor. He has convened a Scientific Committee that conducts inspections, assesses how data is handled and that issues periodic reports.

In discussions with researchers and during other gatherings, it has not escaped my notice that the Stapel case has been a real wake-up call for science, especially for social psychology. This academic discipline should be given the opportunity to put its affairs in order and regain the trust of the scientific community. It goes without saying that it also has to make the most of this opportunity. We are going to do just that here in Tilburg by taking the lead in high-quality and methodologically sound research.

Finally, let me emphasize that *'Flawed Science'* was an expensive lesson for all involved. Stapel was simply given far too much leeway to do as he pleased. Many individuals in all echelons of academia share responsibility for this shortcoming: university administrators, close colleagues, journal editors, co-authors and so on.

Fortunately, the whistleblowers had the fortitude, courage and perseverance to call attention to this serious issue. I am grateful to them, and I hope that their actions will be seen as exemplary throughout the academic world.