


Notice: *PSPB* Articles by Authors With Retracted Articles at *PSPB* or Other Journals: Stapel, Smeesters, and Sanna

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Task Force on Publication and Research Practices, Society for Personality and Social Psychology¹

Abstract

Numerous articles by the social psychologists Diederick Stapel, Dirk Smeesters, and Lawrence Sanna have been retracted in several different journals. The present notice reports the results of an investigation into papers authored or coauthored by these individuals, and published in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, that have not been retracted. The status of these papers range from data confirmed as legitimate by coauthors to, in many cases, being unknown as to their legitimacy. Given the lack of information in the latter cases, there is insufficient basis to recommend retraction at this time. Researchers using the results of these papers in their own work are advised to take the information reported in this notice into account.

Keywords

retracted articles, Diederick Stapel, Dirk Smeesters, Lawrence Sanna, counterfactual thinking, priming, self-efficacy, social dilemmas, temporal perspective, terror management

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Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), Task Force on Publication, and Research Practices

When articles are retracted by journals on the basis of possible or probable research fraud, or when authors themselves simultaneously retract multiple articles on the basis of “invalid data” of unspecified nature, questions naturally arise concerning other articles by the same authors that have not been retracted. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (*PSPB*) has published a number of articles by three authors (Diederick Stapel, Dirk Smeesters, and Lawrence Sanna) who recently had other articles retracted. The Executive Committee (EC) of the SPSP, the publisher of *PSPB*, appointed a special task force to consider actions the Society might take to improve the reliability of published research. The EC also specifically asked the task force to determine the status of the nonretracted articles published in *PSPB* by these three authors based on information gathered by the SPSP Publications Committee (Carolyn Morf [chair], Diane Mackie, and John Levine) over the past 2 years. The purpose of the present notice is to inform the Society and the *PSPB* readership about what could be learned and the current status of those papers.

Diederick Stapel

The Dutch committees investigating the research activities of Diederick Stapel published their final report on November 28, 2012 (<https://www.commissielevelt.nl/>). Over the years,

Stapel published 15 papers in *PSPB*, of which 8 have been retracted on the basis of the committee’s finding of either “fraud determined” or “evidence of fraud” (see References 1 and 2). In all cases, Stapel’s coauthors were determined not to have been in any way involved in the generation of the fraudulent data, and all who could be reached (10 out of 12) agreed to the *PSPB* retractions. According to the “Retraction Watch” website, a total of 53 papers by Stapel have been retracted across several different journals, as of this writing (<http://retractionwatch.wordpress.com/2013/08/02/measure-by-measure-diederik-stapel-count-rises-again-to-54/>).

The Dutch report was comprehensive and detailed, and the SPSP task force did not see the need to duplicate their work. The report did not find evidence of fraud in nor advise retraction of the remaining seven *PSPB* articles listed below:

1. Ko, S. J., Judd, C. M., & Stapel, D. A. (2009). Stereotyping based on voice in the presence of individuating information: Vocal femininity affects perceived competence but not warmth. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35(2), 198-211.

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2. Schwinghammer, S. A., Stapel, D. A., & Blanton, H. (2006). Different selves have different effects: Self-activation and defensive social comparison. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32(1), 27-39.
3. Stapel, D. A., & Koomen, W. (2005). When less is more: The consequences of affective primacy for subliminal priming effects. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(9), 1286-1295.
4. Spears, R., Gordijn, E., Dijksterhuis, A., & Stapel, D. A. (2004). Reaction in action: Intergroup contrast in automatic behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(5), 605-616.
5. Stapel, D. A., Martin, L. L., & Schwarz, N. (1998). The smell of bias: What instigates correction processes in social judgments? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24(8), 797-806.
6. Stapel, D. A., & Schwarz, N. (1998). The Republican who did not want to become president: Colin Powell's impact on evaluations of the Republican Party and Bob Dole. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24(7), 690-698.
7. Stapel, D. A., & Winkielman, P. (1998). Assimilation and contrast as a function of context-target similarity, distinctness, and dimensional relevance. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24(6), 634-646.

Dirk Smeesters

Following the resignation of Dirk Smeesters from Erasmus University, Rotterdam, in July of 2012, three articles of which he was an author were retracted at the *Journal of Consumer Research*, the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (see References 3, 4, and 5). The source of the first retraction was not specified; the others were retracted at the request of Erasmus University.

The Publications Committee identified two papers published in *PSPB* on which Smeesters was the third author, and attempted to gather additional information from the authors of these papers (including Smeesters). These papers are as follows:

1. Lam, S. R., Morrison, K. R., & Smeesters, D. (2009). Gender, intimacy, and risky sex: A terror management account. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35(8), 1046-1056.
2. Morrison, K. R., Wheeler, S. C., & Smeesters, D. (2007). Significant other primes and behavior: Motivation to respond to social cues moderates pursuit of prime-induced goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33(12), 1661-1674.

Attempts to contact Dirk Smeesters directly were unsuccessful. In response to a query from the publications

committee, Dr. Kimberly Rios (previously Rios Morrison), who was a coauthor on both articles, stated that she collected the data for two out of the three studies in each paper, whereas Smeesters collected the data for the third. Specifically, she cannot speak to the validity of the data in Study 3 in the first paper and Study 1 in the second, as she saw only the statistical results, but not the raw data. Stephanie Dolan (previously Lam), the first author of the first paper, said that she is in agreement with this statement. Christian Wheeler, the second author of the second paper, said that to his knowledge Dr. Rios's report was accurate and that he had nothing to add.

Henk Schmidt, the Rector Magnificus of Erasmus University, stated that the University has established a committee to investigate "Smeesters' complete works, including the articles in *PSPB* in 2007 and 2009." He expects the investigation to be complete before the end of 2013 and said he will provide its findings when they become available. Any findings pertaining to the *PSPB* articles will be reported in a future issue of this Journal.

Lawrence Sanna

Lawrence Sanna resigned from the University of Michigan in May, 2012. Subsequently, he requested the retraction of at least five papers, in three separate journals, not including *PSPB* (see References 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10).

A total of nine papers with Sanna as an author have been published in *PSPB*. The papers are as follows:

1. Sanna, L. J., Chang, E. C., Carter, S. E., & Small, E. M. (2006). The future is now: Prospective temporal self-appraisals among defensive pessimists and optimists. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32(6), 727-739.
2. Sanna, L. J., Chang, E. C., & Carter, S. E. (2004). All our troubles seem so far away: Temporal pattern to accessible alternatives and retrospective team appraisals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(10), 1359-1371.
3. Sanna, L. J., Chang, E. C., & Meier, S. (2001). Counterfactual thinking and self-motives. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27(8), 1023-1034.
4. Parks, C. D., Sanna, L. J., & Berel, S. R. (2001). Actions of similar others as inducements to cooperate in social dilemmas. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27(3), 345-354.
5. Sanna, L. J. (1997). Self-efficacy and counterfactual thinking: Up a creek with and without a paddle. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23(6), 654-666.
6. Sanna, L. J., & Turley, K. J. (1996). Antecedents to spontaneous counterfactual thinking: Effects of expectancy violation and outcome valence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22(9), 906-919.

7. Swim, J. K., & Sanna, L. J. (1996). He's skilled, she's lucky: A meta-analysis of observers' attributions for women's and men's successes and failures. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22(5), 507-519.
8. Sanna, L. J., Turley, K. J., Mark, M. M. (1996). Expected evaluation, goals, and performance mood as input. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22(4), 323-335.
9. Sanna, L. J., & Paul, A. Pusecker, P.A. (1994). Self-efficacy, valence of self-evaluation, and performance. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20(1), 82-92.

In response to inquiries by the publication committee, Craig Parks and Janet Swim, the first authors for Papers 4 and 7, respectively, declared that they could vouch for the legitimacy of all of the data and analyses that are reported. Edward Chang, a coauthor on Papers 1, 2, and 3, stated that he has no basis for assessing the legitimacy of the data as his involvement was limited to offering feedback on manuscript drafts, and he was not involved in data collection or analyses. The third authors of these papers could not be located. Kandi Turley, a coauthor on Papers 6 and 8, stated that her role was as a graduate student coauthor. She assisted with data collection, trained undergraduate research assistants who gathered most of the data, and assisted with data entry. She further stated that at the time they were conducting the research, she saw nothing that would have caused her any concern or to question the legitimacy of the data. Mel Mark, a coauthor on Paper 8, was not involved in the data collection so cannot comment directly on the legitimacy of the data, but recalls nothing that raised any questions at the time. Paul Pusecker, coauthor of Paper 9, described his involvement as helping to edit a draft of the manuscript, and having no contact with data collection. He stated that therefore he cannot comment on the legitimacy of the data. Sanna is the sole author of Paper 5, but attempts to contact him have been unsuccessful.

Sanna was a member of the faculty of the University of Michigan from July 1, 2011, until his resignation on May 31, 2012. Maya Koberly, the Associate General Counsel at the University, stated that "the University certainly takes any allegations of research misconduct seriously," but added that "our policies . . . generally provide for our primary review of any allegations of misconduct that pertain to research conducted during an individual's time here." The articles on the list, above, were all published before his arrival at Michigan. Koberly, and the University of Michigan, provided no information concerning the issues that might have led to Sanna's resignation and did not provide nor even confirm the existence of any investigative report.

Sanna was a member of the faculty at the University of North Carolina (UNC) from 2000 to 2012, when the retracted articles were published. An investigation conducted by UNC

preceded these retractions (see Reference 11). The Vice Chancellor for Research at UNC, Robert Lowman, stated that of the nonretracted *PSPB* articles, only 1 and 2, above, likely involved research conducted there, and that "neither of these two articles was the subject of allegations of misconduct or the UNC-Chapel Hill inquiry. Therefore, I cannot render an opinion regarding any possible concerns that might be raised about these two articles." The remaining articles on the list (3-9) appear to stem from research conducted at Washington State University, where Sanna was a member of the faculty from 1993 to 2000. Nancy Magnuson, the Interim Vice President for Research at Washington State, told the task force that "there is no record here of any investigations into allegations of data irregularities in research articles written by Dr. Lawrence Sanna while he was here at WSU or after he left."

Conclusion

The commission of data fraud by prominent researchers and the publication of fraudulent data in some of social psychology's most prominent journals are among the most disturbing events in the history of the discipline. However, the fact that a researcher has retracted papers has been found to have committed fraud, or even has acknowledged such fraud in some papers does not necessarily imply that all papers in which the researcher was involved are tainted, and certainly should not be taken to imply that the coauthors of these papers, some of which were students, engaged in any unethical activity. As this report describes, the status of *PSPB* papers by these authors that have NOT been retracted range from data confirmed as legitimate by coauthors to, in many cases, being unknown as to their legitimacy. Given the lack of information in the latter cases, there is insufficient basis to recommend retraction at this time. Researchers using the results of these papers in their own work are advised to take the information reported in this notice into account.

Authors' Note

Sara van Valkenburg, the Corporate Counsel for Sage Publications, was helpful in contacting officials at the University of Michigan, the University of North Carolina, Washington State University, and Erasmus University.

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Articles Addressed by This Report:

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