

Shifts in technologies of care for social psychology

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The international field of social psychology suffered extensive bruising in the mass media after the announcement in 2011 of severe and continuous scientific frauds conducted by the widely published, cited and awarded Dutch social psychologist Diederik Stapel. The announcement was followed by substantial debates in the mass media as well as discussion in social psychology lasting until today. Both lines of debate have sought to (re)install clear-cut normativities of how to relate to and conduct social psychology. This has been done by locating the causes for such scientific misconduct sometimes in the individual scientist and sometimes in the field of social psychology, and by identifying mechanisms for preventing future fraud. Rather than viewing the controversies as a multitude of positions and standpoints, the paper approaches different ways of engaging with this public problem (Addelson, 2002) as ways of caring for social psychology. Which technologies of care for social psychology have unfolded, and what normativity do they involve? Based on analyses of published debates and of interviews and field work among German social psychologists, the paper inquires how technologies of care for social psychology figure and are configured (Haraway 1997; Suchman 2007) in research practices, in scientific papers, and in the field's discussions of how to regulate scientific ethics: what is cared for, how does care unfold, and what carers are figure? Shifts in normativity appear with different (con)figurations of the technologies of care for social psychology. It is suggested that rather than a clear-cut normativity, care for tensions across shifts in normativities is needed (cf. Verran 2002).