

WCRI 2019

Procedures on research integrity: a bird's eye view

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Discover the world at Leiden University

Credentials

- Yvonne Erkens
- Phd on Labour Law adjudication
- Associate professor of Labour Law at Leiden Law School
- Labour Court judge
- Chair of the Committee on Scientific Integrity of Leiden University and the LUMC

Programme

- Birds
- Complaints
- Principles
- Solutions

Guess who?



Basra Reed Warbler

- The **Basra reed warbler** (*Acrocephalus griseldis*) is a "warbler" of the genus Acrocephalus. It is an endemic breeder in East and southern Iraq and Israel in extensive beds of papyrus and reeds. It is easily mistaken for the great reed warbler but is a bit smaller, has whiter underparts and has a narrower, longer and more pointed bill. It winters in East Africa.

Research Integrity?



- “When people told themselves their past with stories, explained their present with stories, foretold the future with stories, the best place by the fire was kept for the storyteller.”

— **Jim Henson Productions**

A Story on research integrity

- Main characters:
- a Dutch professor, epidemiologist and member of the council of COPE
- a Dutch biologist claiming that a study on the breeding biology of the Basra Reed Warbler was fraudulent and has to be retracted

A Story on research integrity

- several claims on research integrity directed against the Dutch professor;
- several claims on misconduct ('being rude') directed against the Dutch professor;
- claims on research integrity directed against members of the Dutch Central Committee on Medical Ethics (including secretary who sent the letters);
- claims on research integrity directed against the rector magnificus of Leiden University

A Story on research integrity

- Content of the claim:
- ‘Study on the breeding biology of the Basra Reed Warbler was fraudulent and has to be retracted’

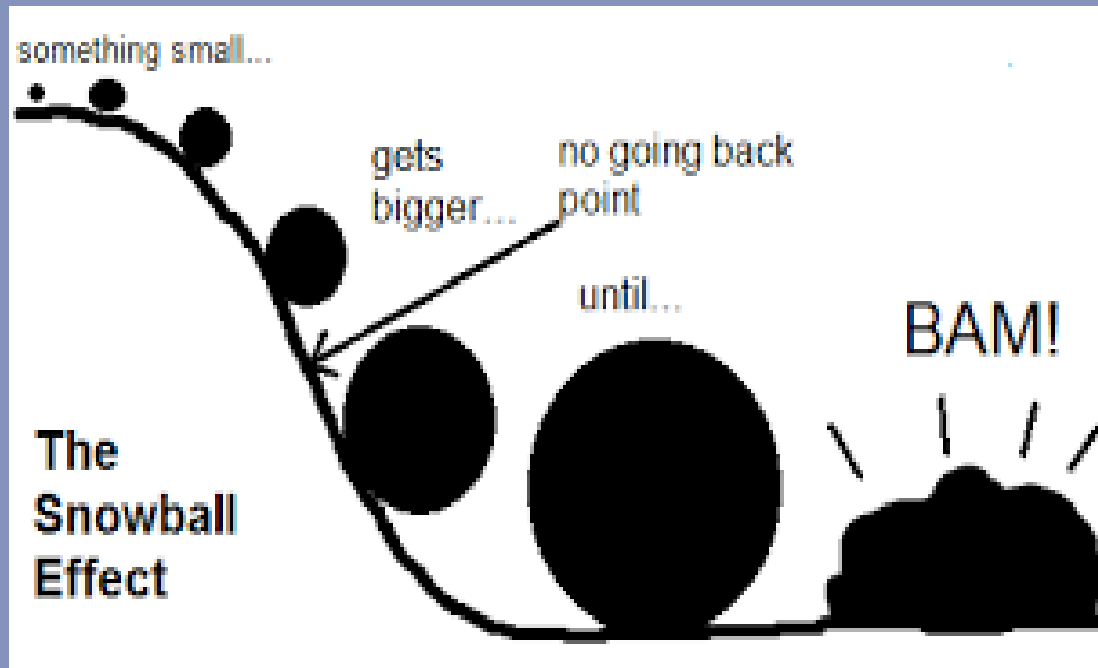
A Story on research integrity

- But:
- the Dutch professor is a medical epidemiologist who has never done research on birds (and doesn't know anything about them except that they can fly);
- the members of the Dutch Central Committee on Medical Ethics know a lot about ethics and human beings, but little about birds;
- and the rector magnificus is a manager who knows a lot about a lot, but that does not include birds.

Misunderstanding or crusade?



What does it matter?



It matters..

- The defendant is vulnerable:
- the complainant sent his e-mails to everyone, everywhere
- and in Holland we have a saying 'where there's smoke, there is fire'
- Scientific integrity is a serious thing and so is the complaints procedure. This behavior causes conflict of choice (committee wants to take a claim seriously) and work overflow

Claims and procedures

- I won't go into details concerning the Dutch complaint procedure for breaches of scientific integrity,
- but in the perspective of misdirected allegations two principles deserve further attention.

Complaint Procedures

- Principles:
- Accessibility

Dutch complaint procedure

- 2.1
- Everyone has the right to submit a complaint to the Commission

Complaint Procedures

- Principles:
- Confidentiality

Dutch complaint procedure

- 2.3
- The handling of the complaint must be entirely confidential. The complainant and the complainants, as well as the third parties engaged by the complainant and the accused, owe confidentiality during the complaint procedure. This confidentiality also includes the notification that a complaint is or is being submitted to the Commission.

Breach of confidentiality

- What if the complainant totally ignores confidentiality?

How to deal with misdirected allegations?

- Dilemmas:
- to what extent can you take claims like this seriously?
- to what extent do you have to take claims like this seriously?
- how to deal with abuse of rights?
- how to deal with any damage that has occurred or may occur as a result of misdirected allegations?

Solution?

- Narrowing accessibility of complaints procedures on scientific integrity to stakeholders only?
- But: science belongs to us all...

Solution in the case of the Basra Reed Warbler



A Story on research integrity

- One question remains:
- did they live happily ever after?
- the Basra Reed Warbler story continues, just like this symposium: now Ivan Oransky will tell you more stories.

