

## THE PROPOSITION

For PhD candidates, their thesis propositions are an opportunity to publicly express their professional and personal convictions about science and society. In this feature they explain their most thought-provoking proposition. This time it's Abel Boerboom, who defended his thesis on Friday 10 February. He was supervised by special professor of Nutrition and Obesity Treatment Eric Hazebroek.



‘Weight discrimination is completely accepted in our society.’

‘There is a stigma attached to overweight and obesity. That is clear from comments like “once past the lips, forever on the hips” and “fat people can’t diet”. The stigmatizing starts during childhood, when children are bullied at school. Being overweight can affect whether you get a job or are given the right healthcare. Research, mainly in the US, shows this is very common. My proposition says weight discrimination is completely accepted. That is putting it quite strongly, but that’s OK for a proposition. The fact is many people don’t realize this is happening. So in that sense there is acceptance. I am a doctor and I studied how to optimize stomach reduction procedures. Stomach reduction is an option for people with

obesity if lifestyle interventions don’t help. I studied whether the result of the operation is better if you change the procedure in a certain respect. I find my patients suffer from weight discrimination. What can you do to stop it? That is not simple. Of course raising awareness through campaigns or TV adverts is always a good thing. But this is a complex and multifaceted problem that won’t be solved with a TV ad.’ RK